Working Artists

Jesica Eileen Speed

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Communication Studies.

Chapel Hill
2012

Approved by:

Madeleine Grumet

Steve May

Dennis Mumby

Eric Houck

Julia Wood

Abstract

JESICA EILEEN SPEED: Working Artists
(Under the direction of Madeleine Grumet and Steve May.)

In this study, I discuss the tensions that emerge as the performance of an artist's work is articulated to the organization of schooling. Based on 15 months of ethnographic research, art-making, interviews, and historical research, this project's discussion is anchored in the work of artist and bookmaker Meg Peterson, the teaching artist at the prestigious Penland School of Crafts in Mitchell County, North Carolina. Her work as a teaching artist over the last 30 years provides an intimate view into the organization and negotiation of long-term relationships between artists and schools, teachers and curricula, and organizations and communities. As a teaching artist, Meg's work bridges the organization of arts education and art-making at a nationally-reputed craft school and a local school system in a high-poverty, rural county in the Southern Appalachians. By focusing on the tensions that emerge as her artistic work is articulated to the organization of schooling at both the Penland School of Crafts and the Mitchell County Schools, through this project I am able to discuss the discursive closure of professionalism of art-making and teaching, the aesthetic practices rife through teaching work, and the power of naming one's artistic practice. Simultaneously exploring possibilities of doing and presenting research artistically, this project articulates together the work of organization, particularly the organization of schooling and education.

Acknowledgements

This project was a joy, and an effort on the behalf of many whose contributions attributed to both the richness of this work and my life over the last several years. I began with the desire to research communities and art; somewhere along the way, I found myself embedded in a beloved and artful community. To the myriad people involved in this community: thank you. There are a few who I must mention by name.

My family. I could not have completed this project without my family, who both supported this endeavor and kept me grounded with a lot of good-natured laughter, often at my expense. In the most literal of ways, my parents' patient grace, honesty, and support enabled me to finish when it seemed impossible.

My advisor, Madeleine Grumet. Madeleine early saw the artist in me, rigorously helped me to sharpen my skills, and kept me and the work grounded in questions and tension. She helped me to build and protect an intellectual studio in which I could do my work. Madeleine, too, introduced me to Meg and to Penland.

My advisor, Steve May. Steve steadfastly encouraged the connections I drew between organizing, art, and schooling, and helped to create space for that conversation. His hopeful pragmatism equipped me to continue trekking forward. Steve, too, connected me with Student U, where the initial questions for this project began to bubble up.

My committee members, Dennis Mumby, Julia Wood, and Eric Houck. Their insights, onwards!, and intellectual curiosities fostered spaces and conversations in which a project like this could unfold with rigor and optimism.

My dear friends, who know who they are. Without this community of people who shared laughter, brainstorming, long walks, art-making, tears, and meals with me over the last several years, there would be no dissertation – and far less joy.

In many ways, most of all: the named and unnamed people of Mitchell County, North Carolina.

Morgen, Gary, Stacey, Adrienne, Wendi, Michelle, Melora, Tamara, Brandon, Jennifer C., Paula, Dana, Bette, Jennifer C., and Rhonda: the teachers and administrators of Mitchell County Schools and the Penland staff who make art "go" in so many ways. Their generosity of spirit and time and insightful negotiations of their always-complicated work are what provide the reason for writing something like this.

The students of the Mitchell County Schools, whose uninhibited lunchtimes and welcome of a short-haired stranger "from off" who needed to learn how to write a book are just as artful as the wonderful books they make each year.

And, of course: Meg Peterson. Meg's beautiful work and spirit are painted across these pages and now, my life. I've worked to make my book beautiful, Meg.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Working Sketches

> The real work of an artist is to build up an experience that is coherent in perception while moving with constant change in its development. (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 53)

We are preoccupied with education. Schools are cultural institutions, highly organized systems at the center of many of our lives, and ever-present in politics and media as loci of both critiques and hope. Educational institutions occupy a powerful cultural space by delivering agendas set by dominant political and economic discourses. This is particularly true in the current era of state and national standardized accountability measures in American K12 public education. Though often spoken about as if they will save the nation, teachers – those "heroes" of schools – are more frequently denigrated through rhetoric about "accountability" and "standards." Prescribed curricula and benchmark testing turn "good teaching" into risky creative deviance marked by the possible failure to make "Adequate Yearly Progress." Economic sanctions, local and national politics, mandated curricula, lack of "professional" status, gender politics, and our own local and pedagogical sensibilities come all come to play in the organization of schooling and education.

Artist work, craft, and craftsmanship are processes often claimed to offer profound alternatives to the functionalized and standardized forms of schooling common in today's public education (see Rabkin & Redmond, 2004, for example). In April 2012, the United States Department of Education published the first-ever broad survey to better

understand the ways in which No Child Left Behind educational policy has impacted arts in education. The results, unsurprisingly, are not encouraging: art education in schools decreased significantly between the 1999-2000 and 2009-2010 school years, with decreases disproportionally affecting school districts with fewer resources. The report shows a significant correlation among low school resources and low school test performance; unsurprisingly, perhaps, the report also correlates the most significant decreases in arts education with lower test scores. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan commented on the findings, calling the report both good news *and* bad news: the report offers good news because it shows that the arts are still important to learning and education, and bad news because it reveals the ways in which there are significant gaps among access to arts education that may be perpetuated by No Child Left Behind-era schooling.

Paradoxically, less than a month before the Department of Education's report on arts and education, the Council on Foreign Relations (2012) released its own report on United States education reform and national security. Former Superintendent of New York City Public Schools Joel I. Klein and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice chaired the report committee. The report argued that to fix the "national security crisis" of the failing American public schools, teachers and students needed to be held more accountable to the increased standards of a national core curriculum featuring science, math, foreign languages spoken in high-interest areas (like the Middle East), and global awareness. Even at the upper echelons of American public schooling's agenda-setting, disagreements abound about the ways in which schooling and resources should be best

organized. In the face of insecurity, however, the push is often for standardization and more benchmarks (Taubman, 2009).

The separation of artistic work from the typical organization of schooling is not a rift unique to schools and education. In fact, separation of artistic work from the typical organization of industrial capitalism is, because of industrialism's long influence on American public education since its inception (Taubman, 2009, Tyack, 1974), a more likely source of this rift. Artists' work is often organized out of our work lives. When art is brought into schools and organizations, it is often brought in as an object or an experience separated from the artists who created it. While art objects and exposue to art are valuable, other impactful ways of integrating art into schools exist. Social movements and social justice work sometimes associate with finished art products, and museums and arts industries exist around the purchase and sale of art objects. But art's objects are different from the performance of artists' work.

Artistic work is world-building, re-making, critiquing, thinking, objectifying, subjectivity-making and participating in the creation and unfolding of our own lives as active agents and spect-actors of beauty and possibilities. Artists' work is an aesthetic practice toward which craft artist and scholar Anni Albers (1944) points when she suggests we re-think education so that we can rebuild the world. Artistic work is an aesthetic practice that pragmatist and educational scholar John Dewey (1934/2005) writes about as having the potential to re-organize our experiences internally - guiding "the whole of the live creature, toward a fulfilling conclusion" (p. 84). Artistic work is an aesthetic practice that arts education advocate and artist Eric Booth (2001) says we can pursue every day, in everything, as a way of seeing, critiquing, and making the world.

Through this project I look at artists' work as a critical and useful mode of communicating, organizing, and structuring experience. In artist's work, I look for possibilities that we might employ in our work-lives, our organizations, our teaching, and our art-making in all of its infinite forms as we learn to increase our comfort with tension and conflict and difference.

What tensions emerge when the performance of an artist's work is articulated to the organization of schooling?

My research asks this question in order to better understand the ways in which the performance of artists' work – *not* the commodified buying and selling of art-work – generates tensions as it is articulated to the typical ways in which schooling is organized. As artist's work is articulated to the ways in which schooling is typically organized, I expected to see some of the innate tensions between the cultural and political assumptions associated with artists and those involved in the organization of schooling. Though I do not use articulation theory as a framework for this study, the use of the word *articulate* is an intentional choice; throughout this study, I have paid particular attention to the tensions that arise as the performance of an artist's work *gives voice or distinction* to the organization of schooling. The practice and discourse of the organization of schooling is often marked by discursive closure, while practices and discourses of aesthetic and artistic work are often characterized by openness and the creation of new possibilities.

Aesthetic practice, even as a heuristic, provides us with a theory of agency, subjectivity, and action while emphasizing the wholeness of an experience. This project's attention to aesthetic practice is both a hopeful and critical choice. Through aesthetic

practice, I am able to attend to structural issues of power, subjectivity, and agency while seeking modes and concepts of work and communication that not only critique, but imagine alternatives. Coming to this project, my library of books and experiences were predominantly in critical organizational studies, performance studies, and pedagogy, all of which I read with particular interest toward the ways in which communication functioned and shaped realities. As such, I am guided by a critical attention to power and control, theories of action and intervention informed by teaching and community work, and my own aesthetic sensibilities. The path to using aesthetic practice and artistic work politically is unclear, though I maintain that the tensions that emerge as artists' work is articulated to the organization of schooling will paint an interesting and complicated image.

I did not pursue this study in order for organizational members and artists to understand one another better – my hope was that instead of understanding, I arrive at a complicated image of the tensions among, surprising similarities between, and political possibilities of the tension-filled intersections of artists' work and the organization of our schools. Ultimately, I hoped to contribute to conversation around the organization of schooling and the use and development of work in critical organizational studies, performance studies, and pedagogy.

An artist friend commenting on my research confessed that for a while, she thought that I was writing a book so that artists could understand organizations, and vice versa. Taken aback that she thought I might (or would be interested to) write such a book, *and* by her surprising willingness to read it, I perhaps too-emphatically said, "No! It's not about understanding! It's about *not* understanding and working together anyhow." I think

she was relieved. This desire to "understand" artists and the creative process is one I see coursing through pop management books on "closing the innovation gap" (Estrin, 2009), finding economic success by working like an artist (Florida, 2002, 2010), and in any number of the 10,489 titles that popped up on Amazon when I searched for books on "creativity." I am more interested in complicated relationships than easy understandings.

Critical organizational scholar Eric Eisenberg (1990/2007) encourages organizational scholars to develop theories that acknowledge the myriad communicative practices organizational members may engage while pursuing personal, social, and cultural significance (1990/2007). For me, the phrase "theories of communication" calls forth images of prescribed behavior, not necessarily the movement and variety that would characterize the myriad communicative practices Eisenberg (1990/2007) describes. Though I was attracted to Eisenberg's (1990/2007) vision for organizational communication theory, I did not understand the ways in which any "theory" of communication or organization could generate the kind of creative space necessary for those "myriad" communicative practices. I find organizational scholar Bryan Taylor's (2005) description of what organizational theory *should* be in our postmodern world a helpful alternative. Taylor (2005) asserts that organizational theory would be more helpful if representations of organizational communication that "support[ed] relationships and structures that we feel create positive, rather than negative, consequences for organizations and society" (p. 132) *became* organizational theory. In other words, Taylor (2005) writes that the most helpful organizational theories could come from close looks at communicative practices that seem to do more good than harm.

When the emphasis of art is on the products it yields, art work does not ooze into "organized" society and cause any kind of unwelcome stir (Adamson, 2010; Dewey, 1934/2005; Hyde, 1983). While there are certainly instances of art objects that have created upheaval and stir in broader communities, generally, art-as-object is something separate from the day-to-dayness of the ordinary lives of ordinary people. As a counterpoint, craft scholar Glen Adamson (2010) suggests that virtuosic performances of craft skill, or craft-in-the-making, have the potential to move us beyond a general obsession with art-as-object. He writes: "craft skill is useful not in its own right, even if it renders us captive in open-mounted amazement; it is at its best when it gets people talking and puts things on the move" (p. 25). The performance of artists' work is what makes art *go*. The lasting value of artists' work for is that it generates productive wonder that sparks conversation and gets things moving – a kind of work often articulated to *and* organized out of schooling. With this in mind, I located this project in the work of an artist whose work intersects two different organizations: a small, low-resource rural public school system and a highly-respected national institute for craft education.

Locating the Project

In this project, I discuss the central question through the work of painter and bookmaker Meg Peterson. Meg is a teaching artist who works and lives in a small county in western North Carolina. Her work as a teaching artist in that community over the last 30 years provides an intimate view into the organization and negotiation of long-term relationships between artists and schools, teachers and curricula, and organizations and communities. Every year, Meg teaches each of the nearly 600 third, fourth, and tenth grade students enrolled in the Mitchell County School system to hand-craft books. In the

process of teaching bookmaking to the children, Meg works closely with the third and fourth grade teachers, as well as the tenth grade English teachers, to ensure that she weaves the school's curricula into the books projects and helps the teachers to teach their curricula *through* the books. One of the hoped-for outcomes of this type of arts integration work (when art methods are integrated fully into the mandated curricula of the school), too, is that teachers and administrators learn from artists' mode of working. While Meg has worked in and around the Mitchell County Schools for the last three decades, her bookmaking project is newer - and more sustained - than her previous work with the schools. The bookmaking project has existed in its current form since 2006.

Mitchell County, North Carolina, is certainly a singular place - one whose particularities emerge throughout my research. While a microcosm of society, Mitchell County, North Carolina and Meg's aesthetic work in and through the Penland School of Crafts and the Mitchell County Schools are influenced by history and economics and cultural currents and political trends that exceed the particularities of this small place and its particular set of relationships.

As a teaching artist, Meg's aesthetic practice intersects with the work of two organizations: the Mitchell County School system and the Penland School of Crafts. Meg is employed by Penland as their *professional teaching artist*, though all of the teaching and artwork that Meg does through this position is with Mitchell County students and teachers. Meg is a respected part of the artist community at Penland, and has over the years been an artist-in-residence at Penland and taught several summer intensives for paying adult students. As Penland's teaching artist, however, Meg's aesthetic practice

and artistic work are distinct from the work done *by* and *in* both the Mitchell County Schools and Penland School of Crafts.

The artistic work at the Penland School of Crafts is object-based. In the aesthetic process taught and practiced at Penland, artistic skill and method, human hand, and material are organized in such a way to ultimately produce craft objects. The teaching work in the Mitchell County Schools is organized around the North Carolina Standard Course of study and the benchmark exams that govern teaching of curricula throughout public education in North Carolina and beyond. Meg's artistic and pedagogical work in both organizations functions differently, despite the crossover language of "artist" and "teaching."

The vast majority of North Carolina's school districts are consolidated by county; the Mitchell County School system is the consolidated county-wide school system that serves the approximately 2,000 school-age children who live in its rural mountains. Like all public school systems across the country, the work of the Mitchell County Schools exists in relationship to state and national curricular and accountability standards that extend beyond its particular geography and local culture. State-wide and national curricular and accountability standards are hallmarks of corporate influences on teaching and learning (Taubman, 2009, 2011). The increasingly benchmarked culture of education over the last decades has functioned to homogenize curricula in both K12 schools and teacher education programs - locally, nationally, and globally (see, for a fuller discussion, Yates & Grumet, 2011).

The Penland School of Crafts is a national center for craft education, regarded as stalwart of "high craft" or "craft as art," with serious art studio and residency programs

that attract and retain adult students and artists from across the country and around the world. Officially begun in 1929 as a (secular) offshoot of an Episcopal mountain mission school, Penland has an educational, economic, and aesthetic history of its own, which both converges and diverges from the educational, economic and aesthetic history of Mitchell County.

The context of Meg's aesthetic practice exceeds the particularities of Mitchell County; the happenings of this tiny place are contoured by broader discourses and practices. Rurality is not purely geographic, relegated to less-industrialized regions of the country. Negative connotations of "rurality" tend to evoke images of poverty, isolation, dearth of resources, and few organized opportunities for work. Those evocations are certainly features of rural life, and yet they by no means define the entire experience of rurality. Poverty, isolation, dearth of resources, and few organized opportunities for work, too, describe the plight of many urban areas, as well (Florida, 2002, 2010). I point this out because often, staking claims on geographic territory (or philosophic, for that matter) unnecessarily limits the contours and possibilities for interdisciplinary conversations of meaningful critique and generative practice. Philosopher Christopher Higgins (2005) argues that because occupations tend to shape our work environments, in fact, there can sometimes be significant rifts between our physical environments and the organizational realities we occupy. For example, K12 public school teachers in Brooklyn and western North Carolina may, despite great distinctions in the geography and, likely, demography of their particular locations, experience many similarities in the ways in which their work is shaped, guided, and governed. Or, artists working in and around the Penland School of Crafts might feel that they have more in common with artists working at the Haystack

School of Crafts in Maine or in East End of Pittsburgh than with their mine-working or farming neighbors two miles down the street.

Therefore, in this study I draw connections between the ways in which the standardized culture of institutionalized assessment frame benchmark testing in schools, or how gendered assumptions of "professionalism" render some ways of working more valuable than others. I draw those connections because though Meg, the Penland School of Crafts, and the Mitchell County Schools all exist in the relative isolation of the Southern Appalachian mountains of western North Carolina, Meg's work and the organization of both schools are connected to economic, historical, and cultural practices that exceed the local.

Meg's work in and through the Penland School of Crafts and the Mitchell County Schools is applicable to a number of conversations far removed from their immediate contexts. I have intentionally crafted this study, however, as a close and in-depth study of the particularities of one woman's work in order to respond to more recent suggestions by organizational scholars that these kinds of close studies are necessary to further theory and practice in organizational communication studies (Cheney, 2007; Cheney et al., 2002; Cheney et al., 2010; Deetz, 2005; Taylor, 2005).

Before Mitchell County

I arrived in Mitchell County in March 2010 with a general question about the ways in which artists' work existed in tension with the organization of schooling. I arrived at this question after my colleagues and I encountered great tension between "unconventional" schooling and "traditional" schooling while we led a nonprofit organization called Student U. Student U was (and is) a racially and socioeconomically

diverse organization amidst the existing racial and socioeconomic diversity of Durham, North Carolina. During my time at Student U, I encountered what sometimes seemed to be irreconcilable differences between artistic work and the professional work of teaching. Spending some time with this organization will help to show the context in which these tensions emerged.

The heart of Student U's programming is an academically-intensive 6-week summer program for middle school students. Each year, we enrolled 50 new rising sixth grade students who committed to attend the program for each of their middle school summers. Our teachers hailed from three local universities; the majority of our teachers were *not* education majors. While I worked there, my job was most like a "principal," doing a lot of teacher training, staff development, and curricular development. As is the case with many new, small non-profit organizations, everyone wore many hats. I was also a bus-driver, nurse, field trip planner, art teacher, and English teacher. Also, as a young 20-something and second year PhD student, I was both the oldest and most experienced member of the staff; as an organization, we worked on hope, energy, and big ideas rather than tried-and-true methods.

During that time, I often borrowed from my teaching experience and theoretical background in performance studies as I tried to cultivate space for the requisite cacophony that comes with deep and intentional diversity. A few startlingly *beautiful* moments in organizing, communication, and aesthetics occurred during this period. The following story illustrates one of these beautiful moments (which was actually a process).

Halfway through the second summer of the program, several seventh-grade teachers approached the director of the organization and me with a request: take the

students to Washington, D.C. Washington, D.C. is a four and a half hour drive from the Triangle area of central North Carolina, yet worlds away for many of our students who had never left their home city of Durham. The director immediately asked logistical questions; my questions were curricular. In my opinion, the trip was a logistical impossibility; I left the director to figure out those details. In the interim, I decided to use the energy around the hoped-for trip to build a grade-wide project with the teachers.

The teachers decided that they and their students would all work over the next few weeks to learn about Washington, D.C. and civil rights, culminating the work with their own versions of speeches loosely modeled on Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream." We developed lessons in public speaking, performance, and writing. Science teachers worked on metaphor in their classes; math teachers worked on logical arguments and the geometry of D.C. monuments in theirs. Global Connect teachers analyzed great speeches and social movements in their classes; English teachers worked on grammar, figurative language, argument, and rhetoric in theirs. In every class across the grade, "proud and loud" public speaking (a particular challenge for many of the program's English-language learners) became a common practice.

Our director managed to find the money and permission slips necessary to take our students on an overnight trip. The day before we left for D.C., each of our 44 seventh grade students and 12 seventh grade teachers delivered her or his unique "I Have a Dream" speech. Each class selected a representative speaker. The next day, our bus departed from Durham at 5:30a.m. Around noon, the bus dropped us off at the Lincoln Memorial on the Mall in Washington, D.C. We walked up the steps of the memorial, gathered into a tight group, and sat down facing the Washington Monument on the other

end of the Mall. There, each of the representatives gave his or her speech to 44 seventh graders, 12 college-age teachers, 4 staff members, several tourists, and the 4 security guards who gathered around our perimeter and thankfully listened to the speeches before ousting us from the steps of the memorial. I leaned against one of the memorial's columns behind our students as they listened to and cheered for their peers' dreams for themselves and for equality in their neighborhoods, Durham, the state of North Carolina, our nation, and our world.

As a program, we worked closely with the chair of the education program of a local university. That university's particular process for teacher preparation, though well-regarded and successful, often conflicted with the realities that the teachers and I encountered in our classrooms as we "made do" with the limited resources we had at hand. Many of our most successful teachers were those who were able to work with curricula and students metaphorically, tangentially, systematically, and who seemed unafraid of making mistakes. Among the shining moments like the speeches on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, we experienced many moments filled with strife, confusion, and tension. Raced and classed assumptions about family relationships, communication patterns, leadership, and privilege emerged. I needed to address my own privilege and whiteness, but was oblivious to that fact until one of my students of color asked me what I thought about the fact that I was white. Interestingly, however, our ongoing struggles arose most often when my art-based or improvisatory ways of working with teachers and students conflicted with deeply-held assumptions (even my own) of what organized education should look like.

Left to my own devices, for instance, I would have voted against our Washington D.C. trip. The trip and endeavor seemed too risky to me, too off the script of what a safe summer program should do. The teachers wanted to show up at the Lincoln Memorial to deliver speeches *without permission?* How would we raise the money? Didn't trips like this normally take months to plan? I am grateful that I did not make the decision on my own. Despite the trip's curricular and logistical success, though, I was frequently told that many of my own and the teachers' unconventional, experientially-based ideas and practices of teaching and leading seemed *unprofessional* and too *unstructured* to "count" as school and educational experiences. Sometimes, despite my commitment to working artistically and improvisationally, I agreed with the criticisms. Perhaps our critics were right. I was suspicious, however, that something more was going on. For reasons both organizational and personal, I resigned from my position at Student U in late August 2009.

Arriving in Mitchell County

My first trip to the Penland School of Crafts was in the cool and wet early days of spring. Familiar with my deepening questions about the intersections of artistic work and the organization of schooling, in March 2010 curriculum theorist and education scholar Madeleine Grumet and education scholar Wendy Atwell-Vasey invited me join them on their trip to Penland so that I could meet Penland's teaching artist, painter, and bookmaker Meg Peterson. Madeleine had met Meg a few years before when she worked as a consultant for Penland's Teaching Artist Initiative during the program's planning year. Since then, Madeleine had participated as co-facilitator of a number of workshops for current educators and graduate students at Penland. On that first trip, I met Meg,

explored Penland, and spent one evening with Madeleine and Wendy and Meg as we filled Meg's home with stomach-aching laughter, the kind that brings tears. This first trip to Penland felt rather magical. The combination of the mountains, Meg, and Penland captivated my imagination. I was immediately curious about the ways in which Meg, as an artist, was able to work between Penland and the Mitchell County Schools, organizations I perceived to be quite different.

The Penland School of Crafts employs artists, some of whom come from all over the world to teach in six week courses, some of whom live nearby and provide not only instruction but the community that constitutes Penland. Paulus Berensohn is a Penland muse, and one of the many in larger artist community surrounding the Penland School of Crafts with whom Meg has a close relationship. An accomplished potter and Meg's mentor and dear friend, he generously hosted us that springtime day. On the sun-specked back porch of his home, we raised our grapefruit juice and scotch in our mismatched, perfectly hand-sized handmade cups as we toasted the sun and the ready-to-burst springtime of the surrounding trees. Paulus, wearing a purple shirt much-loved and many-times-patched, recited a "borrowed" poem. He had re-titled it with a title he liked better, but kept the lines of Mary Oliver's "Why I Wake Early" the same. He performed her poetic salutation of the morning sun to the sun of our afternoon on his porch.

> Why I Wake Early, by Mary Oliver
> Re-performed by Paulus Berensohn, with a new name I cannot recall.
> Hello, sun in my face.
> Hello, you who made the morning
> and spread it over the fields
> and into the faces of the tulips
> and the nodding morning glories,
> and into the windows of, even, the
> miserable and the crotchety –
> best preacher that ever was,

dear star, that just happens
to be where you are in the universe
to keep us from ever-darkness,
to ease us with warm touching,
to hold us in the great hands of light –
good morning, good morning, good morning.

"Did you know," he later asked, "that there are 360 pounds of bug flesh in the world for every pound of human flesh?"

I did not know.

"Why do we think, then, that the human eye's way of seeing is the best way of seeing our world?"

As he asked this question, he opened a handmade book. The book looked like one of Meg's; its pages contained woven photographs. Paulus' question to me about seeing the world was not idle; he had asked this question in various ways for some time. A most recent endeavor was experimenting with the kaleidoscopic and fragmented vision he imagined insects to have. To create these images, he sliced a photograph horizontally and another copy of the photograph vertically, then re-wove the warp and weft back together to create an image of the same size. These kaleidoscopic images were multiplicitious and fragmented; they had the feeling of polyvocality even though they were in fact two images of *the same moment of reality*, sliced different ways and re-combined into a whole. That afternoon he shared with us weaving upon weaving of these kinds of images: mirrored, rotated, and made negative. In this meditation on "proper vision," he experimented with ways of layering *like upon like* to challenge the taken-for-granted ways in which we might assume sight works. The images which Paulus began were often close-up shots of buds, blooms, bark, or nature's detritus - macro photographs of things that insects might encounter in their daily lives. Though the images Paulus used for his

weavings were often microscopic details in the much larger world, his method of literally re-presenting those images generated imaginative opportunities to ask much larger questions about sight, ideology, and what our assumptions about sight and perspective reveal and obscure.

For 15 months, I traveled between my home in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and what became a strangely adoptive home in Mitchell County. I began showing up in Meg's studio at the beginning of her 2010-2011 school year, and throughout that year studied both Meg's aesthetic practice and the communicative environments of the Mitchell County Schools and the Penland School of Crafts. I timed my visits to Penland in order to learn each step of Meg's bookmaking process with students and teachers in the county, so that by the end of the 2010-2011 school year, I had participated in each step of Meg's workshops and lessons for the books Meg teaches at each grade level. A significant portion of the evidence for this study is drawn from my observations and participation and Meg's aesthetic process. Additionally, evidence for this study comes from historical and archival research of the Penland School of Crafts and Mitchell County Schools, ethnographic research in Mitchell County, participation in two county-wide bookmaking project planning meetings, and focused interviews with seventeen persons involved in the teaching, administration, and facilitation of the bookmaking work in the Mitchell County Schools and Penland School of Crafts.

I more fully discuss my time in Mitchell County and method of learning and interpreting Meg's work and the organizations in Chapter Three. For now, it is important to note that throughout this study, I both learned *and practiced* art-making. Meg's condition for my presence in her studio and workshops was that I participate fully as a

student and teacher, making art shoulder-to-shoulder with students and teachers (and helping throughout the process). As an unintended side effect of this research, I began to grow into my own artist's hands. My own growing understanding of myself as an artist and the pursuit of my research and academic work *as an aesthetic practice* shapes how I have worked to craft this project's shape and trajectory.

At some point during our brief afternoon visit, Paulus paused to summarily say, "Imagination is not true stories or false stories, but *real* stories." In my project, I have worked to weave real stories and images together in ways that reveal the surprising ways in which Meg's artistic work exists in tension with the Penland School of Crafts and the Mitchell County Schools. The anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973/2000) describes anthropological writings as "fictions; fictions, in the sense that they are 'something made,' 'something fashioned,' […] not that they are false, unfactual, or merely 'as if' thought experiments" (p. 15). Certainly, I have crafted the pieces of this work through a combination of question and method and perspective, and hope that they reveal more than they obscure. Like Paulus and his images of close-up insect life, I too began with close-to-the-ground moments of blooming practice and educational and organizational detritus.

When I began this project, I assumed that Meg's artistic process bridged two otherwise unrelated organizations. My first experiences with the Penland school of craft's extended community through Paulus and Meg seemed so open and exciting compared to experiences I encountered working in more traditional educational organizations. What I did not anticipate were the ways in which the schools, Penland, and Meg's work overlapped and intersected in curious and interesting ways that provide us better understandings not only of artistic work, but of the relationships among the

commodification of experience, the pedagogical elements of experience, and resistance through artistic work.

Outlining the Project

In the next chapter, I more fully trace the convergences and divergences of educational, economic, and aesthetic histories and cultures of the Penland School of Crafts, the Mitchell County School system, and Mitchell County. I trace those convergences and divergences in order to both carefully render Meg's aesthetic practice and its particular contexts: the organizational and communicative environments of the organizations with which she interacts. After all, we can hardly separate aesthetic practice and experience from their contexts (Dewey, 1934/2005). Penland and Meg's work in the community and the Mitchell County Schools captivated my imagination, and I imagine that as you learn more about Mitchell County and Meg's work there, they may captivate your imagination as well. Like Paulus and his photographic experiments, I too begin with close-up shots of shoulder-to-shoulder work, paste paint, magical mistakes, and also organizational detritus - macro images that people in these contexts experience in their everyday lives. With my question at the fore: *What tensions emerge as the performance of an artists' work is articulated to the organization of schooling?* my intent has been to re-present close-up images in ways that reveal the threads woven through them.

The moments that capture our imagination are exceedingly real, and the polyvocal possibilities revealed when those images are sliced up and re-rendered are also quite real. I have worked to keep this study's question at the fore of my imagination and work with these images, maintaining a tension between beauty and rottenness in the hope that along

the tensions, we may be able to both celebrate and use our critique in order to imagine and incite change.

Since I sought to understand tensions that emerged as Meg's work was articulated to the organization of schooling and in and through the Penland School and the Mitchell County Schools, I organized this study around *her* work. In Chapter Three, I outline the methodological framework of this project. Throughout this project, Meg encouraged me to participate fully alongside the teachers and students, making art shoulder-to-shoulder with them. As a result, I made art throughout the process of researching and writing the dissertation. Chapter Three details this project's methodological underpinnings and explains the ways in which art making, bookmaking, and teaching became salient symbolic forms through which I engaged with people, ideas, and experience in Mitchell County. In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, I work through the surprising pieces I learned in this process. I designed this study to look closely at Meg's work, interested in it as a bridge between two seemingly distinct organizations. The last three chapters deal with the surprising features that emerged from that inquiry.

Before diving into the work of this project, I want to briefly address what this project is not. This project is not a Floridian "creative class" (2002, 2010) proclamation of a "new economy" that advocates learning JavaScript and new media and running to an urban center in order to prosper. This project is not a romantic treatise that idealizes "the artist" and advocates running off to a cabin in the woods in order to escape society and work creatively. This project is not about "organizational aesthetics," necessarily, a thread of work which tends to take a managerial perspective on the *use* of aesthetics and creativity in the workplace (Warhurst, Witz, & Nickson, 2003). There are certainly places

for those kinds of work, but this project has different and perhaps more ambiguous goals. Finally, this project is not hard-and-fast theory of aesthetics or creativity in order to declare a new way of working or a panacea for education. For while evidence exists that in this context (and others) arts integration work is impactful, questions of scale, capacity, replicability, and context also govern implementation and success. As historian and educational policy-maker Diane Ravitch (2010) argues, wholesale solutions for education extracted from the particularities of their contexts rarely manifest in the same ways as their initial instances, despite having many valuable insights to offer to the broader organization of education. My project attends specifically to aesthetic practice held in tension with other ways of working in daily life, particularly the work that happens in and through the organization of schooling. There is a particular mundane everydayness to this kind of aesthetic practice that might trick you into believing that its possibilities for extraordinariness are limited.

Throughout this chapter and the piece as a whole, I attend to the "stuff" of experience, the material of everyday life from which art rises. As Dewey (1934/2005) explains, the sources of art in human life are found in the tense grace of mundane moments that combine care for craft, attention to others, and a deep enjoyment of the work. This attention to experience stands in sharp contrast, he contends, with much of our vocational and work-experience, which we encounter with about as much attention as a rock rolling down a hill (Higgins, 2005). As such, I write with a care for craft, attention to you and those from whom I learned in this process, and a deep enjoyment of the work. Just as the project is a critical and generative exploration of what it means to work as an artist, this dissertation is also an exploration of what it means to practice and produce

scholarship as an artist. Before moving into the next chapters of this project, I want to spend a brief amount of time working through some concepts of work, organization, and experience that undergird this inquiry.

Theories of Work and Organization

Despite our social imagination, aesthetic practice does not belong only to artists, sequestered at the peripheries of society. Artists, often marked as outside traditional approaches to organizing and work, work too. Artists work just as teachers and line-workers and CEOs work. Typically, though, "work" is not a word associated with what artists - or teachers, for that matter - do. Artists create. Teachers teach. Line-workers work. CEOs work. The latter two uses of "work" reflect a primarily economic valuation of time and labor exchanged for money. Additionally, the latter two uses of "work" indicate participation in an organized, managed environment. These are frameworks of work frequently used in organizational studies, staying true to the business and managerial roots of the field. Organizational scholar Robin Clair and her students (2008) comment that not only does the colloquial use of "a real job" around university campuses and professional classes favor corporate, institutionalized work, the "real jobs" that organizational scholarship tends to address are corporate, institutionalized work in organizations.

There are some important and notable exceptions to Clair et al.'s (2008) observation, including scholarship which opens avenues to investigate the organization of both work and occupation (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Mumby, 2004; Mumby & Stohl, 1996; Trethewey, Scott, & LeGreco, 2006) and also the ways in which communication organizes power in community (Bowman & Bowman, 2010; Dempsey, 2009; Pezullo,

2010). In the openings rendered by their work and other organizational communication scholars whose research prevents - or asks us to limit - closure (Deetz, 1992, 2005; Eisenberg, 1990/2007, 1995/2007, 2006/20072007; Ferguson, 1994; May & Mumby, 2005; Mumby 2005), I offer this work informed by critical perspectives and infused with aesthetic practice. Like the empirical work upon which this research is based, there will inevitably be tensions among the "organizational" and "aesthetic" strains of the project. Articulating them together, *because* of the tensions, however, is part of the possibility of my work.

A first work story.

Work-stories have long interested me. The stories that we tell about the work that we do, ourselves at work, and the kinds of work to which we aspire reveal the narrative devices we use to organize our experiences of work in ourselves and in society. The ways in which we organize our experiences of work incorporate a complicated pattern of history, socioeconomics, class identification, power, difference, relationships, value, and status, in addition to our subjective experiences of what it means to be "at work."

Growing up the daughter of a man who worked in - and eventually managed - factories, recollections of company picnics and cook-outs speckle my childhood memories. One company meal stands out more vividly than the others - a dinner at our home. For a while, my father managed a fuse plant in a little interstate town south of Louisville, Kentucky. One winter, all of the division's executives came to town from St. Louis for an annual meeting of some sort. There was only one nice restaurant in our town, the county seat of our dry county. The nice restaurant was expensive for what it offered, and unable to serve alcohol; my parents offered to host a big dinner for all of the

executives at our home. My mother prepared trays and trays of her delicious lasagna and scrubbed the house to perfection. My father pulled out the stuffed peppers we had frozen after our garden overproduced hot peppers the fall before and made loaves of fresh Italian bread. My sister and I helped with the cleaning and the cooking and the table-setting and were, I am certain, reminded to be our polite and helpful selves at this dinner with our father's bosses.

Throughout the evening, our guests asked us the question that adults ask children: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Five years old, with chubby cheeks and laughing green eyes, my sister met that question with her crooked gap-tooth grin and a confident declaration that she was going to be an actress. Nine years old, tall and gawky, I looked up and answered sincerely: "A pioneer woman and a feminist."

I remember a few men looking puzzled, pausing long enough for me to notice some chore that could busy me elsewhere. One man asked a few follow-up questions. I explained that Laura Ingalls Wilder, Susan B. Anthony, and my mom were all smart, courageous women who thought that women were just as good as men, and that I liked being outside. I was *already* kind of a pioneer girl and a feminist. Why wouldn't I be a pioneer woman and feminist when I grew up? He persisted, "But WHAT do you want to DO?" - and, after a too-long silence, I muttered something about Sally Ride and being an astronaut someday. He nodded, seeming pleased. I took my sister upstairs and we played pick-up sticks.

All of the men at the party that evening were professionals. They were men with "real jobs," the kinds of jobs that had - and have - institutional and social status because of the significance and meaning of their work (Cheney et al., 2010; Clair et al., 2008;

Fournier, 1999; Gini, 2001; Meisenberg, 2008). They worked in management for a corporation - theirs were the kinds of jobs that paid salaries instead of hourly wages, did not follow "shift" work, and did not leave them dirty at the end of the day. The men there that evening may have worked with machinery, but the machinery they operated daily was the machinery of corporate management. My father was one of the few – if only – men who had any shop-floor experience. Knowledge of his differently-learned labor and of my own small experiences of hand-work growing up had certainly shaped my perceptions and expectations of what work was and could be.

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" is a simple question that adults ask children. Children also ask one another this question, though I suspect that when children ask one another, the question is a form of play and exploration. The question is simple, probably often asked in lieu of better topics for child-adult conversation, yet there are certainly conventions about how one ought to answer it. Those conventions likely stem from both the context of the conversation and how experiences of work and the stories that the question-asker tells about work organize her expectations. "What do you want to be when you grow up?" is an innocuous question, and yet the structures of our work experiences that organize how we interpret the answer it elicits connect to big ideas about the role of work in society, capitalism's reaches, human capacity, and the common good - big ideas inseparable from history, socioeconomics, class identification, power, difference, relationships, value, and status.

When I was young, stories of spunky pioneer girls and the suffragettes and small experiences of hand-work – learned with my dad in his woodshop, with my mother with her basket business and sewing, helping with home renovations, and tending our large

garden – framed how I imagined and articulated my future self. Perhaps hearing a small girl - a small girl in the rural south, no less - declare she would grow up to become a *feminist* simply caught the questioners off guard that evening. Maybe, though, these men's experiences of work framed how they too imagined and articulated their working selves and their expectations of the kind of work toward which I should strive.

I may have only been nine, but I remember understanding that I was supposed to answer their question, "what do you want to be?" with an occupation of some sort. I had no real idea what kind of job I wanted to have when I grew up, but I often imagined the kind of adult I wanted to be. In a loose sense, I expected that I should work on being that kind of adult, and that I would figure out the details of the job later. Perhaps that sense came from watching my mother, whose unpaid labor raising a family and running most of the volunteer organizations in town with careful precision and confident grace showed me that one's abilities and manner of working were not necessarily tied to a particular job title or salary; I am not sure. From the men's responses that evening, though, I suspected that my sense of my future working-self deviated from the story they expected to hear.

The stories that we tell about the work that we do - or will do - are interesting to me insofar as they reveal the ways in which work *works* in us. Work, after all, is something that most of us do in some way, shape, or form - paid, unpaid, seen, unseen - for most of our days, for most of our lives. Christopher Higgins (2005) argues through John Dewey's writings on democracy, pedagogy, ethics, and aesthetics, that we learn more *while* we work than we do *before* we work or as we prepare to do the job. Work organizes our experiences of the world that we encounter (Higgins, 2005), a fact which significantly raises the stakes of what *kinds* of work we do, and what that work does to us

(Deetz, 1992). The education of the young, couched in the language of "democracy" and "citizenship," has had from its earliest incarnations as American public schooling the intent to train workers pliant to the needs of industrialism (Giroux, 1997; Tyack, 1974). This intent, arguably, remains today (Deetz, 1992; 2005). Because of our constant exposure to - and participation in - work, management scholar Al Gini (2000) calls work a *structuring activity:* "a process whereby we impose order and meaning on the raw data of life and the activity of others" (p. 196). He continues, "We see the world through the lens of our labor, and we understand and evaluate life by the metaphors, models, and lessons we have learned on the job" (p. 196). Work is, in many ways, how we organize the experiences of our world. Because work is an activity through which our worlds are organized, discussion of work must necessarily extend beyond the walls of the shop, the home, or the office. I am interested in ways of working and what work does with and through us.

Jobs' work.

I position this inquiry at the nexus of artists' work and the organization of schooling, in the tensions that emerge as artists' work is articulated to the work education. So very much of our sense of self is shaped in relationship to work: whether we can find work or not, what kinds of work we do, the status of the jobs that we have, how our "work" is related to a paid (or unpaid) "job," the kinds of unpaid labor that make households and communities and schools run, our fears that we are working harder or working less than our parents, and our hopes that our kids will work harder or less than us. The values placed on different ways of working, however, segment and stratify us along a spectrum of power and privilege. Around contemporary university and

professional campuses, the phrase "a real job" tends to refer to corporate, organizational jobs (Cheney et al., 2010; Clair et al., 2008). Away from university and professional campuses, however, "a real job" bears different significance. University students may work at "college jobs" while in school, expecting to find "real jobs" when they graduate. Those students' "college jobs," though, may very well be "real jobs" for their co-workers (Cheney et al., 2010; Clair et al., 2008; Gini, 2000). Definitions of "real work" and "real jobs" are often classed and hinge on definitions and performances of masculinity (Ashcraft 2007; Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Willis 1977). What constitutes "meaningful," "real," and "significant" work is contextual, based on standpoints, experience, and meaning and value attributed to work.

My dad worked as a full-time auto inspector at a garage for a while before he went back to school to finish his degree in metallurgy. When he quit his job, the owner of the shop told him he was making a huge mistake. "You'll never do any better than you're doing right now," my dad recalls the owner - a longtime family friend - saying to him as he left.

As a "structuring activity" (Gini, 2000), work and the ways in which our expectations and meanings attributed to work tend to reproduce what sociologist Anthony Giddens (1984) calls "life chances." "Life chances" is Giddens' (1984) shorthand way of referring to the amalgamation of factors that contribute to our opportunities for self-expression and mobility among social classes. Expectations of the kinds of work one will do, family income level, family educational history, one's own educational opportunities, family narratives of work, and one's own life experiences form the "life chances" that make up the structures of social classes and either encourage or limit our opportunities

for movement among them. The thing about "life chances," though, is that they tend to be reproductive: we know what kinds of work are set before us, and tend to make choices based on the assumptions we have about the kinds of work that we will do (Willis, 1977).

Sometimes, however, opportunities shift over time.

When my dad first became a plant manager, his father boasted to everyone who would listen about the promotion. My grandfather and his friends all had immediate ways of understanding the context of industrial work; they had worked in power plants or manufacturing facilities in the steel and tin industries of western Pennsylvania. Looking back, I get the sense that my dad's promotion to "plant manager" bore a significance to them that some of their children's forays into white-collar, professional office work could not. Perched just beyond a familial tipping-point between generations of workers who did "real work" and those who did and will likely have professional "real jobs," I swell with a bit of nostalgic pride at the stories of my immigrant ancestors who came to work in the tin mills and coke ovens of the Rust Belt, of my great-grandfathers and grandfathers who worked as railroad engineers, linemen for the power company, and long-haul drivers, and of the improvisational home- and community-work, combined with large-family-raising, that generations of women in my family have done. I swell with a bit of nostalgic pride at these work stories of "real work" even as these stories of "hard work" cast my and my parents' "work" as neither real nor hard, and even as my training poises me to critically interrogate neoliberal narratives about "working hard and making it."

History, socioeconomics, class identification, power, difference, relationships, value, and status all make up the social fabric into which we weave our own work-stories and experiences of self. And yet, when these factors are used as heuristics for

understanding the meanings and significance of work, we miss important pieces and possibilities of our experiences with work. Used heuristically (as is often the case with critical organizational studies), history, socioeconomics, class identification, difference, relationships, value, and status cannot provide us with the language to fully articulate the nuances of work-experience and expectations.

Often, ways of working that just *make sense* create friction with the ways of working that the role-expectations of our "work" delineate for us. Not all people who work as teachers, for example, do their best teaching work in the particular "modes of teaching" prescribed and accounted-for in teacher education programs and school cultures. Or another example: Yvon Chouinard (2005), the CEO of Patagonia, former rock climber, and environmental activist, writes that as Patagonia grew, he broke all of the taken-for-granted rules of hiring. Instead of hiring well-trained "safe bet" business people, Chouinard (2005) found outdoors-people and activists whose barefoot-working and brainstorming-while-surfing habits made them radically unfit candidates for most other organizational, professional jobs. And while my students (who voraciously devour Chouinard's book each year that I assign it) are skeptical as to whether or not Chouinard's philosophy can apply in "real life," his views nonetheless strike a deep chord with them. The notion that they do not, perhaps, have to craft themselves into something easily marketable to fill the "abstract image" of the professional "real job" they feel expected to find upon graduation invokes a flurry of questions and ideas about different ways of working.

A person must often reconcile her own experience of performing a job with the abstract image of that role, negotiating the broader abstraction of the work that she

performs in the specific context of her own experience in a particular role as she learns (and practices) her occupational role (Ashcraft, 2007). Attending to the dynamic interplay between the abstract images of a job and one's performative experiences of *doing* the work helps to address both the discursive and material conditions of her work-life (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Ashcraft, 2005, 2006, 2007). In effect, this project *in its entirety* explores tensions between abstract images of work and performative experiences of doing that work. This project, however, extends the analysis beyond the discursive and material into aesthetic conditions of work-life. Undeniably, the organization of schooling operates around general assumptions of what kinds of work students will do and what they will need in order to accomplish that work (Kincheloe, 1999). The degree to which artistic work is written out of the organization of schooling reflects the degree to which artistic work is denigrated as a "lesser" or non-social kind of work. The work of teaching is certainly artistic and aesthetic, however, as are many other forms of working and organizing experience.

Question-asking and aesthetic work.

As a doctoral student in a department of Communication Studies, I have taught a number of courses. A story about one, Introduction to Performance Studies, may exemplify both the way I understand teaching as an art as well as my commitment to other ways of working. In this class, I spend the first part of the semester building students' performance skills, so that they have a repertoire of skills with which to create performances, and the latter half of the semester developing those skills with them as they work toward creating performances of *questions*. To begin this *performing question* work, students are asked to stage a "nonsense" performance, to perform *confusion* or,

what theatre director Eugenio Barba (1995) calls "con-fusion," attempting to work beyond the constraints of making sense out of their creations (at the outset). Rather than calling this performance a "confusion" performance, we name it a "research" performance; the research for this performance comes from aspects of students' lives. They are to put these performances together in any way that instinctively feels right to them, any way that "makes sense" to them to put it together, trusting the crafting process to make something in the end. Attending to their everyday lives is their *research* for this performance, and students work on minding – and mining – their own everyday experiences for resources to craft into something. After this performance, rather than asking students to *make sense* of the piece, I ask students to articulate *how they experienced the experience* through a question – a question they cannot answer.

Asking an answerable question is certainly a valid endeavor – we seek and need information. But asking questions that are not immediately answerable requires a faith in the process, a bond of trust, and a sense that the incomplete self – the self that bears the weight of those unanswerable questions – is in the company of others who are *also* standing in the shadows of questions with no easy answers. The performance of inquiry requires an openness not required of other types of performance, a keen attention to possibilities rather than memorized lines. Of course, the lines of inquiry eventually become memorized, as do the approaches to seeking answers or further clarifications on questions, but as students memorize *lines of inquiry*, they continue to sharpen their lenses rather than honing in on specific answers. I ask students to literally *stage* their questions, finding a movement that is somewhat representative of their questions, or their feeling about their questions. I perform with them.

After students perform these first questions, I then join them in a process that requires them to write responses to their questions, to see where their questions take them. They repeat this process several times, and find that this process leads them to more fundamental questions. One student's question: "Why doesn't anyone care about malaria in Africa?" lead to a final performance centered on the question: "How can someone look at disparity in the world and not be changed?" Three students' questions: "What should I do when I graduate?" "Why do kids play?" and "What are my expectations of myself?" morphed into a group performance centered on the question: "To what extent do others' expectations determine my aliveness?" Nearly every student's question changes, deepens, broadens, and becomes far more complex as this process envelops; students encounter complexity in regard to *things that matter to them*. The course content – the curriculum – becomes one means of continuing to seek their questions, to interrogate their worlds as they engage in *research* for these performances.

I offer this extended story as an example of a way of approach teaching *as an artist* that hinges on an interrogation of process, curriculum, and interrogation. Madeleine Grumet (1988) uses philosopher Suzanne Langer's belief that art is an expression of knowledge about feeling to address the issues inherent in reconceptualizing and practicing teaching as an art. Grumet (1988) writes:

> To teach as an art would require us to study the transferences we bring to the world we know, to build our pedagogies not only around our feeling for what we know but also around our knowledge of why and how we have come to feel the way we do about what we teach. Then, perhaps, teaching the text may lead us to devise new forms for knowing that will not compel our students to recite the history and future of our desire. (p. 128)

For Grumet, teaching and education are often the processes by which adults seek their desires through other people's children. Viewing and practicing teaching as an art

requires that teachers build and practice pedagogies that are expressions of knowledge about feelings about what they teach, as well as how they know that material and why they know it the way(s) in which they do. This requires forms of coming to knowledge that enable students to understand how they feel about what they know, as well as how they feel about how they have come to that knowledge and why they have certain knowledge. Teaching as an art creates the same appearance as a dance: an objective representation of a subjective experience. Through teaching-as-art that creates objective representations of subjective experiences, students and teachers alike face new possibilities for knowing *what*, *how*, and *why*. This process of teaching *as an artist* did not happen without struggle for me or, from their reports and performances, my students, either. As I performed my work as teacher-as-artist, artistic work was articulated to the more typical ways of organizing school and pedagogical experiences. As I conclude this chapter, I take us to Meg's classroom – her artist's studio – and the beginnings of her students' journeys as artists-in-classrooms.

Bookmaking's Beginnings

Paste painting is a tactile and sensory experience – paste paint's texture is something like thick pudding. It holds texture well and invites finger-play in its sticky, colorful possibilities. Meg cooks paste paint for her students, boiling water in a large pot on the Ridgeway stove before stirring in different kinds of flour, glycerin, and just a drop of dishwashing soap to make clean-up easier. After the paste cools, she mixes small batches of it with brightly colored artist-grade acrylic paint. The result is richly-colored pudding-like paint that also works as a paste. One of the beauties of paste paint is that the paste works to make regular paper strong enough to make durable covers for students'

books. Students' paste-painting canvasses are large, dampened pieces of paper. They "give their paper a bath" by dipping their pieces of paper into large tubs of water, then drain the excess water drain back into those tubs (or occasionally, onto the floor) before heading to their tables. They use a wrung-out sponge to eliminate any air bubbles between their dampened paper and their tables, and then paint every speck of the paper in order to make it into strong paste-paper. Meg reminds them to paint out over the edges; they get paint on the tables and are concerned. Meg shows them how to clean the tables between paintings so that their next paintings do not stick to the table. Painting days are joyful explorations of color and texture; they also require a certain amount of stamina from students and Meg alike. Paste-painting begins students' bookmaking work with Meg.

This is the beginning of a book. Like all books, this one tells a story. The *story* of this story is one of beauty; a story of an artist's work in isolation and poverty, or community and wealth – it depends on your perspective. The *story* of this story is one of tension, because there is no honest story of beauty that is not also a story of tension. Beauty must exist in some kind of tension, because part of what marks beauty is the wonder that it exists at all. This is a story of work and meanings of work and the kinds of images and relationships that support aesthetic practice. This is also a story of communication, and the ways in which communication works as a media, a form, and a type of sociality that frames our experiences and aesthetic possibilities.

This is a story of the work that an artist named Meg does in the Mitchell County Schools of Mitchell County, North Carolina – one of the 7 counties of North Carolina's 100 that lost population in the last decade as the few jobs that used to exist there

continued to dwindle. It is a story of how, in Meg's wryly self-labeled "always subversive" work, she is an "institutional problem" as she navigates the school system and the Penland School of Crafts, a national center for craft education located in the county, as she teaches all of the third, fourth, and tenth grade students in the school system to craft handmade books each year. It is a story of what happens when, simultaneously, an artist works to teach kids to be artists who can be alone with themselves, a school system works to meet students' educational and social needs while making adequate yearly progress, and a national center for craft education works to cultivate individual and artistic growth through craft in premier studio programs for adults.

This is the beginning of a book, a book that tells a complicated story – a story from which we can learn about the possibilities for working and organizing and communicating *as artists*, even if the work we produce as artists are classrooms or schools or organizations or communities or perhaps, a complicated combination of each. This is a story of how the performance of artists' work is what makes art *go*, of how when there are distinct boundaries upon what art is and where art can go, the impact of artists' work is limited – to our detriment. Like all books, this one must begin somewhere. Following advice nearly 100 almost-fourth graders offered me in May 2010, students who had made books with Meg and worked in them for a year with Meg and their teachers, this is a book that begins with book*making*. I told them I was writing a book. They wriggled behind their desks and told me that before I could write a book, I had to *make* one. When these students-come-bookmakers insisted that the first step in

writing a book was *bookmaking*, they advocated an attention to artist work, craft, and craftsmanship not typically part of the traditional process of schooling.

Bookmaking is art work. Bookmaking is craft work; bookmakers create beautiful and useful objects. Bookmakers navigate tensions between a requisite structural integrity and artistic freedom while also navigating tensions between skill and craftsmanship and the realities of the materials with which they work, as well as mistakes and mishaps that happen along the way. The beginnings of bookmaking are difficult to locate because bookmaking, in this instance, is additionally a practice of communication, a process of organizing, and a pedagogy that intersects with the typical organization of schooling.

The beginnings of bookmaking happen on the floor of an old school building, polished and bright. The children, perched on their knees in a half-moon around a cross-legged artist, giggle nervously when the artist intentionally brushes the thick, homemade paste-paint off the edges of the paper quickly becoming home to a painting of her morning. As she paints, she reminds them that students have been learning and *making* in this classroom for one hundred years, when the Appalachian Industrial School started teaching in a place where the state had forgotten about public schooling. Now owned by the Penland School of Crafts, once a division of the Appalachian School, this building has in the last decade been returned to its original roots as a space where children learn by doing and making. Though this work has been happening in their neighborhood for a century, many children have just made their first trip up the ridge. The artist insists that the students paint off the edges of their paper when they begin to paint *their* mornings, momentarily.

The beginnings of bookmaking happen in a tenth grade classroom, as a project designed to fulfill the tenth grade writing curriculum becomes more and more *personal* for students. The Family, Culture, and History writing project is designed to engage the curriculum while celebrating the rich and oft-ridiculed local mountain culture. "When I was Young in the Mountains" is the title of one of many poems in this collection of work that contains students' "whole souls," in the words of one teacher. Work so deeply personal requires a sturdy structure for facilitation, protection, and preservation. Among school administration, there exists much support for this work, despite the tensions that bookmaking *could* have with the limited resources of time and space in the pervasive audit culture imposed on their schools. In the high school, an administrator questions whether bookmaking should accompany the writing in this project, suggesting that instead of writing in them, students should sell their books as a fundraiser.

The beginnings of bookmaking happen with a catalogue and paint sales, as boxes of thick, artist-grade tubs of paint arrive after bumping in the backs of trucks up winding rural roads. Reams of paper arrive soon thereafter; filling deep shelves the length of a corridor with paper promising to become pages and paintings of nearly 650 books in the upcoming months. Stipulations attached to the current grant won to fund supplies for this work require that the artist spend the entire $5,000 budget before the school year begins in early August. This year, there is enough grant money. This year, the Penland School of Crafts does not have to subsidize the work in the schools. Book board, waxed linen thread, some replacement needles, silvery moon paper, gesso, India Ink, sponges, rice flour, cake flour, glycerin, soap, blocks of clear wax, white colored pencils, glue, and more arrive. Students and teachers will arrive on-site and use many of these supplies,

though many of these supplies will eventually be wheeled classroom to classroom on the silver cart that the artist transports school to school in the trunk of her SUV.

The beginnings of bookmaking happen in an art studio in Philadelphia, when Meg Peterson worked in the studio with a dear teacher and began to practice *teaching* herself. Meg explains that she always knew that she would do the work of arts and teaching in the schools and community. Her premonition is accurate; she arrives in western North Carolina and for nearly thirty years works as an artist and teacher in the schools and the community. The work takes various forms: teaching art at the local Montessori school, leading community workshops and lessons via storefront studios in the two towns in the county, artist residencies in South Carolina (to support her "storefront habit," she says), teaching classes at the Penland School of Crafts and doing a residency there, teaching artist work in schools in nearby districts, and more. She is committed to the place, and people know and respect her and her work. Much of her teaching work is facilitated through series of personal relationships with community members, teachers, school administrators, and a former director of the Penland School of Crafts whose legacy as director was to secure a large sum of money to officially sanction community-based collaborative work (including Meg's). The Board voted to replace him soon after he secured the funding.

As I mentioned, the beginnings of bookmaking are difficult to locate because bookmaking, when it is Meg's work, is additionally a practice of communication, a process of organizing, and a pedagogy that intersects with classrooms, organizations, and community *as well as her own artistic work*. This book is about the *work* of Meg's work and the tensions that arise as her artist's work is articulated to the Mitchell County

Schools and the Penland School of Crafts. Meg is a central and beloved figure at both the Penland School of Crafts and in the Mitchell County Schools. Meg's teaching artist work, however, is positioned along the literal and figurative borders of the broader scope of both organizations; her work, beautiful it is, is not the work of either of these organizations.

As I began this project, I suspected that *both* the Penland School of Crafts *and* the Mitchell County Schools (based on what I knew of public education broadly and, specifically, in North Carolina) were perhaps more concerned, in their respective ways, with producing productive students making notable work (artistically or academically) than steeping students in richly vigorous aesthetic learning experiences. Part of my sense of difference between Meg's craft-based work and the organization of education in both the Mitchell County Schools and the Penland School of Crafts, was shaped by the insights of Black Mountain College weaving professor and influential Bauhaus artist Anni Albers. Much of the art of the American avant-garde is affiliated in some way with Black Mountain College. For 24 years from the 1930s through the 1950s, Black Mountain College operated in the mountains about an hour from Penland. Though there are not explicit institutional ties between Black Mountain and the Penland School of Crafts, many of the same educational and aesthetic impulses support the stated philosophy of deeply creative, sometimes isolated work of the artists at both organizations.

While at Black Mountain College, Albers' husband, Josef Albers, lead an intensely art-centered painting program. He refused to allow his students to call themselves "artists;" they were *students* working through art and craft processes

(Duberman, 1972). This is significant, because together, the Albers insisted that students *use* art and craft processes in the service of learning how to rebuild the world, posing this as a significant alternative to the ways in which even *art* education was typically organized. In fact, Anni Albers used those very words to open a 1944 article in *Design* Magazine: "Our world goes to pieces, we have to rebuild our world" (p. 21). When Albers wrote that the world was going to pieces, she argued that only an education steeped in craft-making could teach people how to rebuild the war-torn world. She wrote:

> Education in general means to us academic education, which becomes synonymous with an unproductive one. If we want to learn to do, to form, we have to turn to art work, and more specifically to craft work as a part of it. Here learning and teaching are directed toward the development of our general capacity to form. They are directed toward the training of our sense of organization, our constructive thinking, our inventiveness and imagination, our sense of balance in form, - toward the apprehension of principles such as tension and dynamic … the long list of faculties which finally culminate in a creative act, or, more specifically in a work of art. (Albers, 1944, pp. 21-22)

Albers argues that generally, an academic education points us to the absence of production, and proposes that academic educations can be made productive when centered upon what she calls art work – craft work. This was an important distinction; her emphasis on the *work of making craft* connected directly to educational models of the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College. Albers' craft work was not, as we often think of "arts in education" today, the presence of art in schools; Albers' craft work was school *though* art. It is art work, or working *through* the art and craft, that Albers claims will help us to build the faculties necessary to rebuild the world.

Albers' and, in general, my own beliefs about the importance of productivity of art work and education highlight one of the ironies of an academic dissertation written about artists' work. I am encouraged by Albers and others, however; their *writing about*

their practices has helped to communicate about this approach, as best as possible through our imprecise language available, the value of artistic work in the organization of education. She contrasts an education organized through art-work to the typical organization of schooling, locating hope in the former, rather than the latter. The context of Albers' statements is 65 years removed and worlds away from the spring of 2012, yet her observations resonate deeply with the context and conversation surrounding education today. I began this project expecting that the tensions that emerged when the performance of an artist's work was articulated to the organization of schooling would be notable, and, because of the organizational distinctions among the Penland School of Crafts, the Mitchell County Schools, and Meg's teaching artist work, relatively clear. What I found, however, was that while tensions *did* emerge and certainly exist among Meg's work and the organization of education in Mitchell County, the tensions are far more complicated than what I had imagined. By exploring the tensions that emerge as Meg's work is articulated to the organization of schooling in Mitchell County, North Carolina, I hope to contribute to possibilities of differently organizing schooling.

Chapter Two: Organizations in Context

Taken by the beauty of this place when I first arrived, I wrote:

> Appalachia is a region with rich physical beauty and, it seems, a deep cultural and communal richness incongruous with the economic poverty that is so very prevalent in the region. North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains line the horizon from Hickory westward, a promise of what's to come after the long flat line stretched out from the coast. I am continually startled at the beauty of these ridges and the way in which the hills so vibrantly tell a story of the passage of time in changing colors and the morphing hours of dusk and daylight. The sky opens to the heavens. A certain placedness pervades this work – the concrete existence and survivals of students and families and cultures in this vein of old, old mountains means to this work: students', teachers', Meg's, and my own. As much as this place has shaped our experiences of living and paying attention to the world, it needs to somehow remain at the fore while not subsuming this story in to a mere anecdote of crafty folk in Appalachia.

Mitchell County is, like many areas in Appalachia, a place of great physical beauty and economic poverty. Nestled in the valleys and ridges along the snaking (Estatoe) Toe River, Mitchell County lies among the Black Mountains and The Roans, stunning sub-ranges of the Blue Ridge Mountains. After North Carolina Highway 226 finishes its switchbacks up the oft-foggy section of road called Cox's Creek, the view from the McDowell/Mitchell County line at Little Switzerland is stunning. Layers of deep black-navy ridgelines undulating with blues and purples and greens and blacks and sunlight stretch out on the southern horizon. The Blue Ridge Parkway's stone overpass spans Highway 226 just five yards north of the county line, informing passers-under that they are crossing the Eastern Continental Divide as they drive beneath.

A small county along the western border of North Carolina at the Tennessee state line, Mitchell County is accessible by snaking state roads that require me to drive cautiously, in third gear, most of the way after veering off I-40 (coming from the east in North Carolina) or I-23 (when I have come from Tennessee). With those roads separating Mitchell County from the more populous regions in North Carolina, no interstate highways running through, and its position on the westernmost border of a very long state, Mitchell County is not a place one easily "happens upon" unless out for a leisurely drive down the Blue Ridge Parkway. Mitchell County feels a long way off from the Triangle (Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill) in the center of the state, known near and far as a hub of university, technology, research, and cultural activity. Adding to this perception and reality of distance (to those from Mitchell County and those "from off"), is the fact that Mitchell County is just as close to population centers in Tennessee and Georgia as it is to cities in North Carolina. Bakersville, the county seat of Mitchell County, is a 54 mile drive from Asheville, NC, twice its distance from Johnson City, TN (26 miles). Bakersville is the same distance from Charlotte, NC (126 miles) as it is from Knoxville, TN (128 miles) – and just as far from Georgia's capital city, Atlanta (250 miles), as it is from North Carolina's capital city of Raleigh (247 miles). Farming, mostly Christmas tree farming, is still a regional source of income and livelihood, and tourism brings money and jobs to the area, as well. Mitchell County is also home to an active arts and artist community; the Toe River Arts Council, the Penland School of Crafts, and independent artists living throughout the hills in the county bring an arts and entrepreneurial vitality to this area.

Mitchell County is home to both the North Carolina Museum of Minerals and the annual North Carolina Mineral and Gem Festival; in a region known for gemstone and mineral wealth, the Penland School of Crafts is truly a gem of another sort. Now an internationally renowned craft school, the Penland School of Crafts was started in 1929 as a cottage industry to preserve the dying art of hand-weaving and hand-dying while providing a means of income for local women. Located in the small community of Penland on a ridge near the center of Mitchell County, the Penland School of Crafts attracts approximately 1,200 students to campus for instruction each year, and an approximate 14,000 more visitors just passing through. In conversation with people in the Triangle and those in the craft and art worlds, I find that many know of the Penland School of Crafts, and yet have never heard of Mitchell County. Even if one visits the Penland School of Crafts, he or she may not "happen upon" Mitchell County. Despite the large number of students Penland draws each year, its activities are relatively contained around its campus. Occasionally a summer intensive will work in the community to build a piece of public art – murals along the entryways to Mitchell High and the Creek Walk in downtown Bakersville are reminders of these Penland classes in the community. Those classes are the exception to the rule. Students during the summer intensive programs at the Penland School spend the majority of their time working feverishly in the studios, attending "slides" and other on-site, craft-related social activities in the evening, working somewhere on campus in work-study positions, socializing with other summer intensive students and visiting teachers, and eating three delicious meals a day at The Pines, Penland's long-standing dining hall.

Like many "from off" who know of the Penland School, I referred to everything surrounding the Penland School as "Penland" prior to spending much time in Mitchell County. Not until my third trip to the area, when I spent a week living out in Bakersville and haunting the downtowns of Bakersville and Spruce Pine to find good places to set up camp and work, did I begin to understand Penland's somewhat insular position in the county. As I quickly discovered thereafter, the county is far more than "Penland." The Penland School is, and has been, working to re-connect with the surrounding community through programs I will discuss later, though I observe that by both people "from off" and locals, Mitchell County is often perceived as quite separate from the craft school up on Conley Ridge.

Mitchell County occupies just 221.43 square miles of land. Nearly 30 square miles (18,916 acres) of the county is protected as part of Pisgah National Forest, which occupies 512,758 acres (801.2 square miles) of land across several of North Carolina's western mountain counties (US Forest Service, 2011). Much of the county is otherwise wooded. After experiencing a fall of breathtakingly beautiful foliage and relatively crisp air, the spring of 2011 taught me why this part of the Blue Ridge is frequently referred to as "the smoky mountains" – the frequent rains generate a misty, foggy, cloud cover nearly impermeable by headlights even in daylight. Quiet and lush, moments during and after rainstorms here bring to mind and body the sensation of being in tropical rainforests closer to the equator, without the tropical temperatures. There is a similar damp heaviness in the air, a similar surprising lush green and pops of defiant color throughout the woods and valleys, and a similar dance of sunlight through the trees as it cuts through the air with light and heat.

In 2010, Mitchell County received $38.466 from the US Forest Service under Public Law 110-343 Amended Secure Rural School and Community Self Determination Act and $46,809 in lieu of taxes (US Forest Service, 2011). These figures place Mitchell County's National Forest income below the threshold ($100,000) of strict governance of the allocation of these funds under the various titles of the law: roads and schools, special projects on federal land, and county projects (US Forest Service, 2011). Mitchell County contains ten townships, two of which (Bakersville and Spruce Pine) are home to incorporated towns of the same names. The largest town in the county, Spruce Pine, had a 2010 population of just over 2,200 persons – Bakersville, the county seat, a population of 460 persons (Population and Housing Occupancy Status, 2010). Excepting the parcel of land belonging to Pisgah National Forest, the remainders of the county's approximately 15,000 people are scattered throughout the hills and valleys of Mitchell County, living in small, named, unincorporated communities that people know and refer to.

Mitchell County is a place where powerful men still own the water rights to the homes in which they were born, because springs from their land up on the knobs above trickle into the cisterns that feed the pipes of those long-sold homesteads. Mitchell County is a place where the Wilson family still drives up Wilson Dairy Road to Wilson's Knob, where the family still lives and the dairy farm still operates. Mitchell County was one of three remaining dry counties in North Carolina until, after much debate, the town of Spruce Pine began offering ABC permits in 2009. One of the popular Friday night establishments in Spruce Pine is the Dry County Brewing Company, where the pizza's ingredients are as local as possible and the beer is good. Mitchell County is a place where a house called Barely A House sits out along a road named Barely A Road. Both the road

and the house, in this case, are aptly named. Long-time folks "from off" (who are not local, but who have made decades of their lives in Mitchell County) refer to dryness as "mountain humor," a kind of straightforward embrace of the way things are by naming them as such. Artist studios fill Laughing Bird Hollow. Barking Spider, Hawk, and Bandana are the names of communities where people live. The "Bandana Club," neighbors along the curves of Highway 80 South that pass through Bandana, get together once-weekly to share stories about history, research new subjects, discuss current affairs in the county, state, and nation, and occasionally to go on field trips to this-or-that site of significance and interest. Mitchell County is a place where, when I am in town, I drive a few miles up a road winding along a creek and continue another mile on the gravel road at its end (often a mud slick in the winter) up the holler to Hostel in the Holler, where I rent a bunk bed and otherwise share the home with the owner, a teacher at the middle school in Bakersville. I am supposed to sing songs or make noise when I come or go after dark (or before dawn) to shoo away any bears who might be nearby (which she has seen in the yard), and we are carefully aware of our water usage from her gravity-fed cistern that sits on the hill above.

The Making of Mitchell County

In the Toe River Valley of western North Carolina, Mitchell County was one of the last counties formed (1861) in the state of North Carolina. Avery County, formed in 1911 from part of Mitchell's northeast corner, was the last. Named for University of North Carolina professor Elisha Mitchell, Mitchell County was formed from the northern half of Yancey County, as well as parts of Watuga, Caldwell, Burke, and McDowell Counties. Professor Mitchell had spent time in the area since 1835, measuring heights of

the Black Mountains. He died on a solo expedition in 1857 while attempting to re-measure a peak then known as Black Dome, hoping to settle a dispute with former student Senator Thomas Clingman about which of the peaks was the tallest in the range. Mitchell's initial measurements were later proven correct. In his honor; the mountain in dispute – which, rising to 6,684 feet elevation, is not only the highest peak in the Appalachians, but the highest peak east of the Mississippi River – was named in his honor. Mount Mitchell and 1,946 acre Mount Mitchell State Park are today located in Yancey County (North Carolina State Parks). Though Mount Mitchell is the highest peak, I always thought the real gem of a mountain in the area is Roan Mountain. Just across the Tennessee border, the northwest portion of Mitchell County sits under its balds. Nestled in fields at its base, the Buladean School (formerly a K-8 school housing the medical clinic and home to many community dinners) marks the center of "town" and activity in that Mitchell County outpost just miles from Tennessee.

Mitchell County's beginning occurred at a tumultuous time in state and United States history – at the outset of the Civil War. One local historian notes that there are reports of the northern part of then-Yancey County wanting to form a new county as early as 1853 (Hardy, 2009), while another pinpoints tension over the Secession Convention of 1861 as a catalyst in the formation of the new county (Sheppard, 1935). Yancey County, once encompassing the entire Toe River Valley, was split into roughly two halves by the Toe River. Though slavery was generally not prevalent in the western part of North Carolina, the few slave-owning families in the county lived in the southern part of the valley. North Carolina eventually played a large Confederate role in the Civil War, but internal state politics were contentious and far from unanimous. North Carolina

was the second to last state to secede from the Union, and tensions in the far-removed mountains of the west ran high. As surrounding southern states began seceding from the Union, state politics became contentious as various counties rose in both support and opposition of secession. The southern part of then-Yancey generally supported secession and the confederacy, which the northern part of the county generally opposed. In January of 1861, the new county called Mitchell was officially formed out of the northern part of Yancey County. By June of 1861, it had secured 50 acres for a courthouse and established a county seat in the newly renamed Calhoun. By 1868, the county seat had been moved to Bakersville, its current location, which was incorporated in 1870.

Though no major battles were fought in Mitchell County, the people of the county suffered not only from lack of food and supplies, but from general lawlessness and those who hid out in the isolated hills to take advantage of women, children, and the elderly left behind. Muriel Sheppard's (1935) account recalls failures of provisions, huge taxes levied, and deep resentments, while Michael Hardy (2009) writes:

> those men who survived combat often returned home maimed in body and spirit, while civilians at home suffered from privation and the depredations of outliers, scoundrels, and soldiers from both armies. The mistrust and resentment engendered by the war lasted for generations. (p. 8)

In the years after the Civil War, mica mining and the coming of the railroad epitomized the development of Mitchell County's industrial development. Carved spiral mica mine shafts in some of the area mica deposits, among other artifacts, indicate that American Indians in the area mined mica and other gemstones long before they were mined for industrial purposes. A market for mica developed after the Civil War; mica sheets were used as windows in stoves and ovens, and by Thomas Edison in his electric motors and phonographs. Mica from Mitchell County was featured in Vienna at the 1892

World's Fair, not the only time Mitchell County's resources have received some fanfare at World's Fairs (Lucy Morgan would later drive a truck with a log cabin built onto it to the 1934 Chicago World's Fair to sell hand-woven goods made by Mitchell County women). Feldsbar and iron ore were also mined in Mitchell County. The arrival of the railroad through the mountains permitted the mass exportation of these heavy goods; some lines throughout the county were temporarily established and dismantled once an area's resources (minerals, timber) were depleted. The building of railroads through this part of the country was no small feat – the Carolina, Clinchfield, and Ohio Railroad (commonly called the Clinchfield Railroad) ran 277 miles and was the shortest route between the Ohio River and Spartanburg, South Carolina – this span of railroad required no fewer than 55 tunnels. Connecting the coal fields of eastern Kentucky and western Virginia through the mountains and down to the textile mills in South Carolina, as well as the iconic Blue Ridge Mountains to tourist traffic, the railroad brought the exportation and importation of minerals, natural resources, and commodities, as well as traffic that spurred the growth of many of the towns that exist to this day along the railway. To this day, coal cars run along these lines at all hours of the day and night.

The railroad reached Spruce Pine in 1905, and quickly a bustling town developed – it was incorporated in 1913. The railroad missed the county seat by several miles, so Spruce Pine and several of the other towns along the railroad grew into larger towns than Bakersville. Once the railroad was completed (down to Spartanburg, SC) in 1915, Mitchell County started to become a popular tourist destination; many inns popped upon along scenic ridges near the railroad to accommodate these visitors. A stone's throw from the railroad depot, many stores, restaurants, and entertainment venues sprung up,

including the Carolina Theater. Built in 1935 as a movie theater and stage, it was also home of the nationally broadcast *Carolina Barn Dance*, which was broadcast nationally to over 500 radio stations until the mid 1950's. Now, DT's Blue Ridge Java fills one of the storefronts across from the old depot on Spruce Pine's lower street. DT's is one of the few places in town to get a lunchtime sandwich and cup of coffee; it is a friendly place to get the internet and some good conversation until its close around eight. From the second time I visited DT's, one of the co-owners (they are a husband and wife team) greeted me with familiarity and asked how my book was coming along. Trains run by all day, mostly hauling coal, though I heard that nuclear waste also passes through. Two or three trains hauling other commodities run the line each day, with the occasional grain train that passes through. The railroad is now owned by CSX, one of the two largest railroads on the east coast.

Sitting in DT's one grey, cold May afternoon, a friendly elderly gentleman struck up a conversation over the comics section in the day's newspaper. I noticed the Clinchfield Railroad decals on his shirt and hat and asked if he was involved in the model train built in the basement of the Spruce Pine library. Enthusiastically, he told me about the railroad for the next half-hour. He and a committed group of hobbyists have reconstructed the railroad from Erwin, Tennessee, "all the way down south," he said. These miniature-train engineers are mostly retired gentlemen from the area; this is a good way for them to spend social time together and, it seems, contribute to the creation of something for the community. He shared of the engineering feat that was the building of this section of railroad through the Blue Ridge Mountains, including the 55 tunnels designed and built on one engineer's promise that they would never have to be expanded

or repaired so long as the railroad followed *his* plans. Save one tunnel (which was dynamited open in the early 1960's), this promise has held true over the last 150 years since construction began on this section of the railroad. The section they were re-creating in the miniature, he assured me, did not have all of the tunnels: "If it did, you couldn't see any of the railroad!" He told me stories about a wreck on the Clinchfield, the corn that grows from the spillage of the grain cars, and the impatience of folks at this or that intersection when multiple trains pass by. For him and his fellow model builders, the railroad continues, it seems, to be a lifeline – or at the very least, a source of interest, history, and camaraderie. He offered me a standing invitation to join them at any of their builds in the library basement.

Spruce Pine and Bakersville are both in the midst of a downtown revival of sorts to garner both local and tourist business. While mining and milling still occur in the county, the towns of Spruce Pine and Bakersville are calling upon another local resource to drive this revitalization effort – craft artists.

The historically rural isolation of Appalachia fostered a culture of "making" that resided longer than it did in more urbanized areas of the country. Provisions almost entirely failed during the Civil War, and prior to the railroad coming to the county in the early 20th century, there was no reliable or easy way to transport goods to or from this region. The railroads' presence, particularly in more remote areas of the county, though, only lasted as long as there were excavatable resources (Hardy, 2009). There was no reliable system of roads until several decades into the 20th century; even still, when I travel to Mitchell County, I do my fair share of tentative driving on washed-out gravel paths up holler where I stay. The roads are such that when it snows, school buses are

often unable to drive safely to pick up kids. In a particularly snowy December of 2010, Mitchell County School students only attended 5 whole days of school. The unreliable routes for transportation and general isolation from metropolitan centers in the state and beyond its borders fostered a rich culture of "making" and "making do" common among the southern Appalachian Highlands (Alvic, 2003). This history of "making" culture connects to the legacy of the Penland School of Crafts and the larger Fireside Industry movement (Alvic, 2003; Becker, 1998).

Today, the Penland School of Craft's international reputation and prestigious artist residency programs draw a vibrant artist community to Mitchell County. Some of the artists affiliated with Penland are transient, coming only for short periods of time to teach classes and residencies. Others, however, have settled in the area immediately surrounding the Penland School of Crafts and make up a "Penland" community that extends the boundaries of "Penland" beyond its perch atop Conley Ridge and into the little train-stop crossroads of the actual township of Penland (which is technically in Bakersville). Some of my initial ignorance of the variance and breadth within the Mitchell County population was shaped by my interaction with "Penland folks" who, despite often being long-time Mitchell County residents, are frequently more *Penland* than *Mitchell County*.

The Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce boasts of over 100 professional craft artists' studios and galleries in the county, including four "North Carolina living treasures," the most of any county in the state. Now Mitchell County taps into the "making" heritage of Appalachia and the proliferation of professional craft artists living among the hills to market the county broadly. Mitchell County "sells" this tradition in its

marketing strategy for business and tourism. “Craft your Adventure,” reads the cover of Mitchell County’s vacation guide (2010), published by the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce. Utilizing the proliferation of craft and artist studios as a market for tourism, readers “from off” find the county presented as a quaint haven for crafters and nature lovers:

> Does the mention of a craft studio visit perk up your ears? Are you someone who would rather experience the outdoors than see it through the windshield? The Mitchell County region of Spruce Pine, Bakersville, Little Switzerland, and Penland combines the best of both world, with natural and handcrafted beauty! Vacations and getaways are not what they used to be. The experience is more important to you than the destination, and unforgettable experiences await you here! Lovingly tucked into the breathtaking beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains is a haven for craft and outdoor enthusiasts … a special place where time moves at its own pace and unique experiences beckon you. This guide is your passport to create your personally handcrafted adventure. Take a look around; then begin crafting your own personal adventure! (Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce, 2010)

Touting this tradition of craft artists as a tourist attraction, this advertisement suggests a *choice* to make, or an intentional “turning back” to the handcrafted and handmade. The very culture and tradition of “making” that emerged from isolation and poverty is now a mechanism through which the county seeks an income. Those in rural Appalachia did not have the luxury to “choose” to make, improvise, or recycle in order to craft particular kinds of existences in the mountains. This advertisement for the county speaks more directly, I believe, to the recently emergent “do it yourself” ethic among people “from off” who have the more available commodities of time, money, and energy to craft, create, and make, who could be convinced to travel to the area as tourists.

A “do it yourself” culture has developed among young urbanites (Florida, 2002, 2010; Levine, 2009), evidenced by the proliferation of container gardening in urban windows and small cement patios, community gardens popping up in abandoned city lots

and in the corners of schoolyards, stores collecting and selling used architectural features to be re-used and re-purposed in "upcycled" projects, blogs with photographs and directions for building, decorating, or cooking anything by oneself with as natural ingredients as possible. Despite the excess of ready-made choices available at the fingertips of many in urban areas (for a certain cost), this "do it yourself" subculture is choosing an intentional "slow-down" of creation, consumption, and production, opting to make one's own fruit and nut bars instead of purchasing them in bulk at the local Sam's Club. And now, the making long associated, through necessity, with poverty has been claimed by those who have more readily available the commodities and, perhaps, might be able to travel to Mitchell County to craft a certain kind of recreational experience.

In 2002, regional author Gloria Houston "donated" the name of her book *The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree* to Spruce Pine, which now dons banners throughout town with the phrase, "Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree." Much-smaller Bakersville has partnered with the organization HandMade in America, which works with small towns in western North Carolina to tap into resources for rebuilding and bolstering resiliency in the face of struggles, both economic and natural. They use the tagline, "Crafting large successes in small towns" (2010, p. 1). In their report of the first 15 years of the program (2010), HandMade in America writes of the importance of *place* in these small mountain towns:

> the small towns of Western North Carolina offer up a unique sense of place. Fine-tuned by size, geography, the weave of land and water, generations-old built environments and streetscapes, they convey a striking character and spirit. (p. 3)

Using an asset- and entirely volunteer-based approach to organizing in these little towns, HandMade has helped to provide some of the networking resources for

Bakersville to restore its historic courthouse at the center of town, now a technology center and distance-learning site for Mayland Community College. In the last 15 years, the town of Bakersville has also (documented through HandMade) posted signs around town, built and, a few years later, lighted a .6 mile creek walk along the bubbling Cane Creek, and partnered with an artist teaching a summer intensive course in mosaic at the Penland School of Crafts to create two mosaics along the creek. In addition, the town has also erected a gazebo performance space along Cane Creek, and installed several quilt squares on buildings and barns in the town and its outlying areas. Now documented in HandMade's *The Craft Heritage Trails of Western North Carolina*, Bakersville, literally and metaphorically, has been "crafting" itself into someplace both beautiful and useful for those who already live there, and those who may want to visit. Perhaps the element of HandMade's program that pulls most upon the tradition of craft artist, however, is its emphasis on partnership, exchange, and innovation, by pairing towns with other small towns as "sister towns," hosting annual retreats for those involved in their respective towns' restoration projects can meet, network with, and learn from those doing similar work in other places, and championing as much a "workshop"-type environment as possible within this framework of "downtown revitalization." Despite the county's use of the lore of traditional craftwork to lure tourists and eek out economical resources, the community of the county is decidedly "county-made."

Out to dinner one night at a bustling Spruce Pine restaurant on the lower street of downtown, I interrupted the laughter and conversation I was having with a county teacher to ask if she was from the area. With a hint of sarcasm, she responded: "It depends. If you're not from here, I'm from here. If you're from here, I'm not from here. And my kids

were born here, but they're not from here either. Their kids won't be from here either!" She spent most of her childhood living in Avery County, just north of Mitchell County, though she moved around with her military family prior to that and lived other places before returning to teach and raise her family in these mountains. Pulling out a bit of an overdone accent, she retorted, "Who's your parents? Who? I don't know them. You're not from here."

With 73% of the residents of Mitchell County hailing from North Carolina, Mitchell County boasts a very local population, particularly given the state's population influx over the last decade. Compared to the North Carolina-born population of Orange County (the home of Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) at 47%, Wake County (the home of Raleigh and North Carolina State University) at 45%, and even the nearby counties of Buncombe (the home of Asheville and the University of North Carolina at Asheville) and Watauga (the home of Boone and Appalachian State University) at 55% and 59%, respectively, this is a stunning proportion of locally-born people (American Community Survey, Selected Social Characteristics in the US: 2005-2009). Avery County (66%) to Mitchell's north and Yancey County (71%) to Mitchell's south are closer in their proportions of North Carolina-born residents, and have more similar conditions (highly mountainous, large tracts of national forest, no interstates, and no large universities). I expect that a vast majority of residents were born in Mitchell or one of the surrounding counties. From 2005-2009, 92% of persons had been living in their current residence for at least a year (American Community Survey, Population and Housing Narrative Profile: 2005-2009).

Around Mitchell County, the phrase "from off" designates those from away – "from off" most literally means "from off the mountain," but it can also designate habits or ways of life "from off" even if one is *from* Mitchell County or has lived a large portion of her life there. I am typically pegged as "from off," or at the very least as having something to do with the Penland School of Crafts – which, though "on" the mountain, is still "off." When people asked where I was "from," they were often more interested in where I was born or where "my people" were from than where I'd driven from that week. My own heritage – a southeastern Kentucky birthplace and a Scots-Irish and Welsh family that settled in the coal fields of the Appalachians of western Pennsylvania to work in the tin mills that dotted that landscape – grants me more acceptance and trust than does my Chapel Hill address and degree. Mitchell County is deeply rooted in Christianity, with a history of roving, unschooled ministers popping into mountain churches for periods of time (Hardy, 2009; Sheppard, 1935). An article from the October 11, 1934 issue of the once-weekly *Spruce Pine News* cites 3,600 "Houses of God" in the county – one for each of the children then enrolled in Mitchell County's Schools ("These Houses of God"). My choice to attend services at the Episcopal Church in Spruce Pine granted me access to a community of artists and engaged community volunteers "from off," though a School Board member who also attends this church informed me that, to the majority of the county, it did not count "as a church." The Southern Baptist church is the presiding denomination in the county. The Southern Baptist church does not believe in ecumenical conversation or conversations about faith with those of other – even Christian, protestant, denominations – save for the purpose of converting one to the particular view of the Southern Baptist Convention.

A history of environmental and social disparagement is certainly wrapped up in this mistrust of people "from off," for many of the area's resources have been mined, stripped, or sold in kitschy story-form so that people "from off" could profit. Those "from off" who have made homes in the county are still considered "off," particularly the artist-types and liberal-types who typically find solace and artistic community surrounding the Penland School of Crafts. The somewhat insular "Penland community" in the county that extends the boundaries of the Penland School of Crafts attracts many "from off," particularly those whose political views, spiritual practices, and lifestyles deviate from the particular scripts of Mitchell County.

The first-ever meeting of the Mitchell County Gay-Straight Alliance occurred on November 15, 2011 in the Bakersville Library (where I often set up camp during my time in the county) and was met by dozens of protestors who expressed great concern (Bovée & Waller, 2011; Forbes, 2011). The police attended as well, and the protest unfolded with as much civility as something like that could possibly unfold, and the subsequent Gay Straight Alliance meetings occurred without protest (Bovée & Waller, 2011). North Carolina's May 2012 primary election included a vote on a legislatively-sponsored amendment to the constitution, an amendment proposing to sweepingly re-define the only legally, state-recognized domestic union as a marriage between a man and a woman. Statewide, voter turnout was 34.38% (North Carolina State Board of Elections, 2012). Mitchell County had the highest voter turnout in the state at 50.72%. Of the 5701 votes cast in the county on Amendment One, 4773 people voted for the Amendment while 928 voted against (North Carolina State Board of Elections, 2012). With 83.72% of Mitchell County voters in favor of the Amendment, the county was among the state's top

supporters of this limited re-definition of marriage (North Carolina State Board of Elections, 2012).

The most salient manner by which I have come to be known, and to know, many in the community, is through my affiliation with Meg Peterson, the beloved teaching artist from the Penland School of Crafts. Though solidly rooted in the Penland community, Meg's work in the schools positions her so that she's far more *known* and perhaps significantly less threatening than the often more abstract image of Penland artists that seems to float around the county. Throughout the county, when I mention that I have been working with and learning from Meg and her school bookmaking program, smiles, postures, and conversations open in ways I suspect they would not otherwise.

Social and Economic Makeup of Mitchell County

An estimated 75% of persons over the age of 25 living in the county have a high school degree; approximately 15% of that same population possess a bachelor's degree or higher (American Community Survey, Selected Social Characteristics in the US: 2005-2009, 2009). In 2009, there was an estimated unemployment rate of nearly 10% (American Community Survey, Selected Economic Characteristics: 2005-2009). The median per-capita income in Mitchell County (adjusted to show 2009 inflation) was $18,522, while the national per-capita income (adjusted to show 2009 inflation) was $27,041 (American Community Survey, Data Profile Highlights). As of the 2005-2009 American Community Survey estimate, 17% of the persons in Mitchell County were living below the poverty level. The numbers increase with youth; 21% of children under 18 were in poverty. Of the county's nearly 4,400 households with families, almost 300 of those families are headed by female householders with no partner present. A staggering

43% of these female-lead households with children under 18 are in poverty; 67% of these households with children only under 5 are in poverty. Every school teacher and administrator with whom I spoke throughout this study cited poverty, and *generational poverty*, at that, as a perpetual and growing factor contributing to their students' needs and an ongoing challenge they face in the project of education in the county.

Between the 2000 and 2010 Census reports, North Carolina's state population grew by 18.5%, growth distributed across all but seven of the state's 100 counties (2010 Census Data). Mitchell was among the seven counties in the state that lost population during this time period. The data from 2005-2009 show that while the "Under 18" group makes up 20% of the county's population, only 8% of the county's population falls between the ages of 18-24. The 25-44 group (24%), 45-64 group (29%), and 65 and over group (19%) are relatively consistent with one another (American Community Survey, Population and Housing Narrative Profile: 2005-2009). Colloquially, this population loss is attributed to very few opportunities for work in the county – the sharp decrease of the post-high school young-adult population indicates that students must look elsewhere for further education or jobs.

The two largest employers in the area are the Blue Ridge Regional Hospital and Mitchell County Schools. As of 2009, 23% of those employed in the county were employed in education, healthcare, or social assistance (Selected Economic Characteristics, American Community Survey). The Director of Curriculum and Technology of the Mitchell County Schools, whose son is finishing up high school at Mitchell High, noted that he doubted his son would ever be able to return to the area to pursue any kind of profession; his interests are neither in healthcare nor education – and

those are the two options. Other industries employing sizeable percentages of the population are manufacturing (17%), construction (11%), retail (11%), agriculture, forestry, fishing/hunting, and mining (7%), public administration (7%) and arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (6.3%) (American Community Survey, Selected Economic Characteristics: 2005-2009). Slightly over 10% of those working in the community are self-employed in their own, non-incorporated businesses (American Community Survey, Selected Economic Characteristics: 2005-2009).

As of a 2009 estimate by the US Census Bureau, North Carolina's population was nearly 74% white and nearly 22% Black, with the remainder of the population largely reporting Hispanic descent. As of 2009, Mitchell County's population reported 94% white (not Hispanic), 4% Hispanic, and less than 1% Black (US Census Bureau). Though the mountain counties have always been majority white, reflecting the relative isolation of the original Scots-Irish population of the area, Mitchell County was not always as homogenous as it is now. The 1870 census reported a total population in Mitchell County of around 4,000 people; 213 were Black. By 1880, when the total population had more than doubled, the Black population did as well (to 503). By 1920, however, in a county with 11,200 people, there were only 56 persons of African-American descent (Jaspin, 2007). Muriel Sheppard's (1935) *Cabins in the Laurels*, much contested and despised by locals for its campy style and oversimplication of mountain life (though one current Bakersville resident, when asked about what I had read as animosity toward this book, retorted: "They just hate it because it's too close to the truth in a lot of ways.") describes her county's outlook in the early 1920s in this way:

> The Toe River Valley had been a white man's country. The Blue Ridge, behind which lies the Toe Valley, looks like a fortress from the low country surrounding Marion in the Piedmont. The native people feel that it is just that, an outpost with customs of its own in a country with different folkways. They are willing to admit white furriners [sic] into their country-within-a-country, but they have no intention of being colonized by colored people. As long as the railroad furnished the principal way into and out of the Valley, the problem was negligible, but by 1922 improved highways were assured that would throw the country wide open. That meant the importation of Negro labor. The mountain people would almost rather not have the highway than let in the Negroes. (p. 131)

Sheppard (1935) was referring to the common-practice use of predominantly African American convict labor to construct roads in the area. One of North Carolina Governor Cameron Morrison's progressive projects while he was governor (from 1921-1925) was "good roads," necessary for the development of business and commerce throughout the state. In 1921, he successfully passed a $50 million dollar bond program in order to build a modern highway network of 5,500 miles. The program was supplemented with an additional $15 million in 1923, and was guided by a state highway commission created by the General Assembly (North Carolina History Project, 2011). Until Governor Morrison's good road program, the roads to and from Mitchell County were rough, narrow, and primarily traversable slowly, on foot or by mule and cart; many of the roads that still exist in Mitchell County were established during this period in the early 20's. With the roads came governmentally contracted work crews, staffed largely by convicts a part of the Trusty system. Convicts near the end of their sentences with a record of good behavior were released as trustees; historian Michael Hardy (2008) reports there was a "prison camp" for trustees in Mitchell County – trustees worked on the road projects during the days and returned to camp in the evenings. Hardy (2008) and Elliot Jaspin (2007) both recount that these crews were primarily African American, though Sheppard (1935) shares some tales of scrapes between some white men of Italian and Eastern

European descent at one of the work camps, as well. Other work crews that set up camp in the county, working in the mines and on ongoing water and sewage projects, also had large populations of African Americans. While the road crews would eventually leave, these other non-government crews might not have.

Governor Morris's sanctions brought work crews to Mitchell County to complete the newly-sanctioned road and sewage projects. According to both Sheppard (1935) and Jaspin (2007), tensions built around the influx of workers, predominantly African American or other "non-white" ethnic groups. In 1923, Mrs. Mack Thomas, from Spruce Pine, accused a passing Black man – one of the men from the convict work camp – of sexual assault, and quickly a mob formed to find him and track him down to "bring him to justice." Japsin (2007) reports of the leaders' families' proudly-recounted fact that this was never to be a lynching mob, rather a group of men to bring him in to the sheriff in town. Unable to find him, this group rounded up all of the African Americans in the county over the next two days and forced them into Asheville-bound cargo cars at gunpoint.

By the time Governor Morrison heard of the mob rule in Spruce Pine and sent two National Guard units to prevent the exportation of all of the Black persons in the county, the mob had already succeeded in its mission. The accused man was, a few days later, tracked down in Hickory and brought to trial. A third National Guard unit was sent in, and the National Guard escorted all of the Black workers and their families back into Spruce Pine and back to the respective camps and homes (some residents servants had been rounded up in the exodus) to protect them and maintain order in the ensuing days. Eventually, when the National Guard left, most of the Black population dissipated. After

five minutes, he was found guilty and sentenced to die through electrocution. In his journalistic account of this happening, Jaspin (2007) indicates that, through interviews and document research, there was never actually any evidence that the accused man committed the crime, and that certain members of the family believe that, perhaps, Mrs. Mack Thomas was startled by the appearance of this stranger (who had a few moments before approached members of her family to ask for a ladle of water) and the whole thing spun out of control. Sheppard's (1935) account offers what I imagine the local commonly-told story entailed, justified by the "guilty" verdict.

I was horrified upon stumbling across this story, as I had long resisted the lore I had colloquially heard from others "from off" living in the area, as well as stories and warnings offered to me down east. My initial interactions with the county had been mediated through Penland, as well, an international craft school steeped in a history of progressive education. I knew Black Mountain College, another progressive educational experiment (in operation from 1933-1957) in Black Mountain, North Carolina – similar in geography to Mitchell County though somewhat closer to Asheville and the interstate – had encountered problems from the local community when it became an integrated institution soon after its inception. I have gotten the sense that 1923's riot was something locals, at least locals "from off" originally, are relatively familiar with – a shameful part of the county's history that is no longer a part of the present. A middle school teacher in Bakersville insisted that she could imagine something "like that" happening today, and let me know about the gas station along one of the state highways in the area that had Klan insignia in its window. A teacher from the primary school in Bakersville viscerally

responded when I mentioned that it was an event I kept running into in histories of the county – it was, she insisted, irrelevant anymore. In a tempered response, she said:

> It's changed. I mean, you could probably find people out in the back, not really in the towns, but off, away from the towns, which is like two steps away (laughing), that probably still have a lot of the same negative view, but would not take it anywhere near the riot. One, they're not going to spend the energy – they're not going to expend themselves unnecessarily.

She elaborated to say that while there might be people in the area who had similar sentiments, the people living in the towns were largely transplants with "absolutely different views" about race – and hesitated, then, to say that the primary issue of race in the county today was more about white and Hispanic relationships (particularly around issues of immigration and language) rather than white-Black relationships – and that she wasn't sure where all of the transplants stood on that issue because people all over the country had such differing responses. (A teacher at Mitchell High School made note of local white animosity toward the Latino community – citing tension with, and examples of outright threats toward, Latino students and their families – in both the school and the community.) She insisted, however, that the kind of outrage that prompted the riot in 1923 could not happen today in Spruce Pine or the outlying areas. She conceded that some people's outlooks and opinions had changed, but this concession was leery at best. The real reason that she cited was her sense that people's capacity for the kind of outrage and collective organizing that allowed the 1923 riot to happen no longer existed.

This teacher immediately insisted that people's lack of initiative to protest so boldly and angrily was "a terrific outcome of the apathy in the area," careful to convey that in her mourning of local apathy and lack of initiative did she in any way hope for or support any kind of racial or bigoted protest. She and I had this conversation in May

2011, six months before concerned Mitchell County residents decided to protest the November 2011 meeting of the Gay Straight Alliance. Perhaps there still exists more potential for action than she saw. Throughout our conversation, apathy emerged as a larger theme in her commentary on the county, its students, and the people. A long-time resident and a person who chose to return to Mitchell County to raise her family, she loves the area – and expressed grave concern with the kind of generational apathy and immobility she sees, and has seen, for a long time. A kind of apathy and immobility, that is, likely rooted in poverty and radically different from both the rich history of making and making-do attributed to this region. An apathy and immobility, that is, very separate from the remarkably rich cache of craft artists currently throughout the hills and working in the community.

Despite, or perhaps, because of the social realities of this mountain region, I have experienced Mitchell County as a place of great paradox and tension, between beauty and sadness, imagination and reality, hope and immobility. I imagine that my experience in Mitchell County has been profoundly shaped by the time I have spent with Meg Peterson, whose presence and work has colored so much of my time here. Meg is the teaching artist at the Penland School of Crafts who currently teaches a bookmaking project across the county. I have come to understand her and her colleagues who do "Community Outreach" at Penland – Stacey Lane and Wendi Gratz – as the primary bridge between Penland on Conley Ridge and Mitchell County as experienced in the everyday lives of the people who live there. During my second trip to the county, I rode with Meg out to four of the five schools where she works, learning along the way about the people and the local traditions of each little community through which we passed. So many whom I

encountered described Meg as "an inspiration" to them and their work, whether they were teaching, learning, running schools, or directing curricula. Meg's emphasis on naming and honoring individuals and moments as beautiful, and her attention to people and their stories in the contexts in which they occur have shaped so much of how I have experienced Mitchell County. In that spirit, I offer a sensation of this place alongside the stories and data that I have thus far presented.

Klezmer music enters a valley in Bandana through the open door and windows of the player's home, sticky and dripping with the remnants of raindrops hanging on heavily to the lush green leaves engulfing the roads down to the house. Resonance: this Jewish celebration music permeates the humidity and the leaves and lingers in the thick green air and works its way into the skin in such a way that the rain drops and the thunder claps and the feet and spirit might all dance together, just this once.

Mitchell County is beautiful, yes, as many who have written about Appalachia have recounted. It has been a place of isolation and continuing poverty, and is certainly a place of innovativeness and inventiveness. To me, Mitchell County has been a place of generosity of effort, creativity, spirit, stillness, and beauty.

Appalachian Industrial School

Though officially begun in 1929, the Penland School of Crafts has important social, educational, and economic roots that extend further into the history of Mitchell County. The Penland School of Crafts of today sits on the site of the Appalachian Industrial School, long owned and operated by the Episcopal Church. *Before* there were reliable and accessible public schools in the county, several individuals and organizations in this area started schools to provide education and skills that would otherwise be

inaccessible or prohibitively difficult for students to obtain. Mission schools popped up throughout southern Appalachia during the pre-World War I era of late 19th and early 20th centuries. They were educational outreach outposts staffed primarily by northern Protestant teachers, built because many of the mountain communities lacked the resources to provide adequate elementary, let alone advanced, education (Waller, 1931). Subscription schools, publicly funded for a few months and then contracted out on "subscription" for students whose families could afford to pay a fee to keep a tutor on, were also common in the area (Hardy, 2009; Jurgens, 1996). Settlement schools, often opened by either churches or progressive organizations seeking to provide centralized resources for the poor, dotted southern Appalachia as well (Jurgens, 1996). Interestingly, these settlement schools often worked closely with local public resources in order to collaboratively solve community needs and problems, not experiencing many (documented, at least) tensions surrounding turf and jurisdiction (Jurgens, 1996). Eloise Jurgens (1996) characterizes these settlement schools as problem-solving extraordinares, networking communally to gather necessary resources to fulfill changing unmet needs. Concluding her study with a reminder of the broad view of resources held by these settlement schools *and* the lessons garnered to social service providers of the late twentieth century, she writes:

> The settlement school workers did not limit the list of those who might be of help, and individuals and private businesses were very much a part of the problem-solving team. As citizens, teachers, business men and women, and a host of other professions, we have, perhaps, come to see the task of empowering people as someone else's job, or more to the point, the job of public social agencies. It could, of course, be argued that had the settlement workers had access to these agencies, they would have called upon them, and there can be little doubt that they most certainly would have done so. Nothing in the actions they took to solve problems indicates, however, that they would limit their resources to any one type of organization. "Their" problems must be "our" problems, and solvers of

> problems must be willing to explore all possible avenues that will lead to creating a better life of those served. (Jurgens, 1996, p. 167)

Surveying the privately-held mission schools after the proliferation of consolidated public schools began springing up in formerly too-rural mountain communities in southern Appalachia, Eugene Waller (1931) found that, despite the proliferation of public services offered where currently there were none, most of the mission schools he surveyed believed their services still necessary. Though some of the schools he surveyed reported that the consolidated county school system was making progress, if slowly, nearly all reported that they would morph into something else – health care, farming, industrial training, social services, or community space – as they faced this new climate with more accessible public schools.

The Appalachian Industrial School was one of these entrepreneurial educational projects. The school, opened on Conley Ridge in 1910 as the Seven Springs Farm School by Wesley Conley, was Conley's dream project to provide an education for mountain children in the area where he was from – an education otherwise exceedingly difficult to obtain because of a lack of school facilities in the area. He and his brothers were the original teachers. After his brother's untimely death a few years later, Conley agreed to sell the land to Bishop Horner of the Episcopal Church, who would continue the work. Horner brought Rufus Morgan, a graduate from seminary and himself hailing from the nearby mountains, to run the school. Morgan arrived in 1913 and remained the principal until 1917, when funds were depleted (Sheppard, 1935). Rufus Morgan grew up in a progressive Episcopal family who also was able to provide an education for his younger sister, Lucy, through connections Rufus had made.

Educated at Central State Normal School (now Central Michigan University), Lucy completed her teacher training with Amy Burt, a mutual friend of her and her brother. For several years, Lucy taught in Montana, Michigan, and Chicago, in addition to working for the U.S. Children's Bureau. During this era, Chicago was a hotbed of progressive pragmatism and experimentation in progressive education and social service, epitomized in projects such as John Dewey's famous Lab School and Jane Addams' Hull House. Steeped in the possibilities of progressive education and social service, (and having worked under a woman at the U.S. Children's Bureau who had previously worked with Addams at Hull House), Lucy returned to North Carolina to teach at the Appalachian School in 1920, which Amy Burt ran during the summers. By that point, her brother had moved on because his wife did not care to live in the area (Morgan & Blythe, 1971). Lucy taught elementary school and served as the principal in Burt's absence (Dreyer, 2004; Morgan & Blythe, 1971).

Lucy and her brother had, during his time at the Appalachian School, discussed the dying local art of weaving and his desire to reinvigorate the art as well as the school's vocational program (Dreyer, 2004). During the beginning of her time at Penland, Lucy set out on foot to the old community of Wing, where she met an elderly woman renowned in the community for her weaving and hand-dying (Morgan & Blythe, 1971). In 1923, a local girl named Bonnie Willis was accepted to Berea College in Berea, Kentucky, and her family asked Lucy to escort her. Lucy spent nine weeks at Berea College, which had an active fireside industry model already established. When she returned, she brought with her several looms, weaving skills, and a prototype for a program that could both preserve the art of weaving while generating additional income

for local women and their families. Using the new loom technology that had developed since many of the local women had seen their mothers and grandmothers weaving on large, cumbersome looms, Lucy desired to teach local women to weave and to dye again, and to create a market for the goods that they created. She would provide the materials and the lessons; they would create goods, for which she would pay them – in turn selling them to a market she would either find or create.

The first woman willing to take this risk was Bonnie Willis' mother; when she returned to Lucy with the first rugs she had made, Lucy gave her a check for 23 dollars, "an impressive amount of cash for a woman in that time and place to earn" (Dreyer, 2004, p. 12). In her memoir, Lucy writes that within no time at all, everyone in Penland knew of the amount of the check she had written to Mrs. Willis (Morgan & Blythe, 1971); women began to join the program quickly. Local men made more looms, using Lucy's looms from Kentucky as templates, and they ordered more, as well. This program operated under the auspices of the Appalachian School, which meant that Lucy had to get permission from the Episcopal Bishop overseeing the school. To do so, she offered the entirety of her personal savings to get the program started. She also accepted, and completed, his challenge to weave for eight hours continuously, in order to demonstrate that weaving was not too strenuous for women – something he feared (despite the fact that local women farmed, cooked, raised children and traveled largely by roads that, at that time, were hardly footpaths) (Dreyer, 2004; Morgan & Blythe, 1971).

The Penland School of Crafts

Soon thereafter, Lucy stopped teaching at the Appalachian School and devoted herself full-time to craft and the weaving industry. In 1929, the Penland Weavers

officially coalesced as its own entity. The of 1929 brought the first weaving seminar taught by a person "from off;" weaving expert (and director of vocational education of the Chicago Public Schools) Edward Worst came and taught the first summer institute. From 1929 until her retirement in 1962, Lucy's organization morphed and grew to include pewter casting, pottery, and other forms of craft. Through her audacity to dream big and begin buildings without completed funding, and her ability to drum up support from the local community as well as the quickly-growing community affiliated with craft, her work established what has become the Penland School of Crafts of today. When she retired in 1962, Penland was in debt and sluggish. Bill Brown, the new director, inherited the legacy of a craft school with a remarkable community ethic and a steadfast commitment to the process of making and experimentation, and began the process of changing Penland into what it is today. Simultaneously, until 1964, the Appalachian School existed just around the bend from the ever-growing Penland plant.

Each of Penland's directors has left a legacy of her or his leadership: Lucy Morgan began the Penland School of Crafts, Bill Brown rescued it from financial distress and established is serious artist studios, Ken Botnick secured funding to ensure the community collaboration work that set the precedent for Meg's work, and Jean McLaughlin, currently, is bringing Penland's facilities up-to-date and building stronger relationships with Mitchell County in order to establish its enduring and long-term success. An interesting point in Penland's organizational history comes at the moment when Lucy Morgan stepped down from her position of leadership and the Board of Directors hired Bill Brown to take her stead. Brown, coming from the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, had an intensive studio background and needed to secure

Penland's financial resources and income if Penland was going to continue to survive. Brown brought with him to Penland a model of serious studio work, studio-work more isolated and "professional" than the workshop work of Morgan's era. During Brown's tenure, he worked to establish Penland's studio and residency program, which largely exists today. Brown's work to establish serious studio programs and to focus on the experience of students helped to solidify Penland's national reputation as a center for craft education hastened the shifting relationship between Penland and Mitchell County that had already begun during Lucy's time.

Teaching Artist Initiative.

Eventually, the Appalachian School's buildings and land became a part of today's Penland School of Crafts. The former school building, Ridgeway, is the home of the Teaching Artist Initiative and the Community Collaborative Initiative, titles often used interchangeably. The Teaching Artist Initiative (or Community Collaborative Initiative) exists to support Meg's arts-integrated bookmaking work in the public schools. Though there are other programs affiliated with the Initiative, Meg's bookmaking work is the central feature of its work. Through the Teaching Artist Initiative, Meg Peterson teaches approximately 550 students in the county – all of the third, fourth, and tenth grade students – to make handmade books, then working with them and their teachers as students work through the dictated curricula of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. Each year, all of the third and fourth grade students in the county come to visit Meg at Ridgeway, where they paint wildly with paste paint, swing joyously on the tire swing hung on the tree with branches like huge hugging arms, and construct the exterior

covers of their books. Ridgeway, for the majority of these students, is their only interface with the Penland School of Crafts; their parents', as well.

Even during Lucy's time, Penland moved further and further away from the community, as the financially resources to raise new buildings came "from off" and not from around the bend. Just in the last five or six years has Penland again started to utilize its rich cadre of resources and ability to network to Mitchell County's benefit – or looked to Mitchell County natives (rather than people "from off") as vital resources of creativity. Another aspect of the Teaching Artist Initiative, "Subs with Suitcases," helps prepare Penland-affiliated artists to substitute teach in the schools. On the days they are called to teach, they bring a suitcase full of art supplies and "pack" a day filled with art, related to whatever the teacher has been teaching in the classroom, into students' lives.

In 2004, the Mint Museum of Craft + Design in Charlotte, North Carolina featured an exhibition celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Penland School of Crafts. The museum produced a stately square book – *The Nature of Craft and the Penland Experience* – filled with eight essays by scholars, writers, and artists invited to experience and comment on the experience of craft at Penland, and glossy, full-color images of the 137 works included in the exhibition. Jean McLaughlin (2004), the then- and now-director of Penland writes in the introduction:

> Craft stands as a common denominator among peoples, as an act of invention, embellishment, and communication. To honor craft is to recognize the value inherent in the human spirit. To pay attention to craft is to learn from materials and processes, to find joy in the utilitarian and the commonplace, and to realize that powerful ideas are made manifest through the work of the hands. One of our goals for celebrating Penland's long history was to create a book which takes a fresh and inclusive look at craft – a book which reaches further than simply telling the story of Penland School and speaks to the phenomenon of craft itself. Our goal was to create a body of new writing which will resonate in the field for years

> to come, and to present a selection of outstanding work which shows craft defined broadly as it is in our educational programs. (p.8)

Nowhere in Penland's 75th Anniversary volume exist any mentions of Penland's connections with present-day educational work in Mitchell County.

Wendi Gratz, the Community Education Coordinator, created displays of the Teaching Artist Initiative's work on two large bulletin boards on the porch of The Pines (on the main campus), but the Teaching Artist Initiative work was (and is) an otherwise invisible process not affecting the adult students or the directors or faculty in the professional studios. Not a part of the published histories of Penland, the work of the Community Collaborative Initiative as an institutionalized part of Penland's work is largely the legacy of the directorship of Ken Botnick, who preceded current director Jean McLaughlin. A committed community member and parent of school-age students, he believed that Penland should be giving back to Mitchell County.

Meg recounts that Ken came to respect her very much, as a teacher, when she was teaching his kids at the Montessori school in town and at the store-front studio she operated at the time, and they entered into conversation about formalizing the kinds of teaching-artist work Meg was doing in Mitchell County and as an artist-in-residence in South Carolina through Penland. Good friends with the then-superintendent of Mitchell County Schools, Botnick established the precedent for Meg's current work and secured its future through a large sum of money he raised to fund the work – over $100,000, Meg remembers. He was promptly fired by the Board of Directors, who then had to choose whether or not they would give the money back to the funders or allow the work to continue. Meg and the then- Community Education Coordinator were already poised to

begin the work. Penland allowed this work to continue, despite its potentially problematic fit with the rest of Penland's "professional artist" studios.

Penland currently describes itself as "a national center for craft education dedicated to helping people live creative lives," with workshops programs as the core of Penland's educational program ("Penland," 2011). The majority of Penland's classes occur in the summer: one- and two- week sessions in a range of craft media, including book and paper, clay, drawing and painting, metals, iron, photography, textiles, printmaking, wood, and other media. During the spring and fall, Penland offers intensive concentrations that run for eight weeks, offering students a focused, single-subject workshop experience to develop, explore, and hone their craft skill. The school's faculty fluctuates, as all faculty at Penland are hired for the courses they will teach. In their information for those interested in teaching at Penland, the website differentiates between artists and teachers:

> Penland's instructors include both studio artists and professional educators. We are looking for artists doing interesting work who are also excellent teachers with these qualities: a willingness to be generous with information, strong technical skills, good interpersonal skills, an ability to teach conceptual information. We encourage innovative classes, classes that advance contemporary expressions in various media as well as classes that incorporate or emphasize historic information and processes ("Teaching at Penland," 2011).

Reminding potential teachers of the intentional spread of ages and abilities that Penland attracts to its classes, the website advertises: "the spread of ages and skills is challenging but can make for exciting classes if the instructor is prepared to work with it" ("Teaching at Penland," 2011).

In a section added to the website in September 2011, Penland describes the Teaching Artist Initiative as crafting "powerful and creative learning experiences for

children" ("Teaching Artist Initiative," 2011). Guided by the educational belief that "our most important learning is relational – motivated by that for which we have love and curiosity," the Teaching Artist Initiative addresses several learning skills in order to "connect children to their lives right where they live them, so they can come to know themselves as capable contributors to the many communities of which they are a part" ("Teaching Artist Initiative," 2011). Illustrating the work that Meg does in the classroom, Penland describes her work thusly:

> Penland works in close collaboration with Mitchell County Public School teachers and principals to provide curriculum-integrated arts opportunities to over 500 rurally-based, underserved students in our Appalachian region each year. Assisted by classroom teachers and her teaching artist assistant, Penland's professional teaching artist Meg Peterson instructs 3rd, 4th, and 10th grade students in how to paint, fold, bind, illustrate, and write in handmade journals and books that support specific units of study ("Teaching Artist Initiative," 2011).

Until information about these programs was added to the Penland website, Penland's Teaching Artist work occupied a place on the peripheries of campus, unadvertised in its landmark anniversary publication, its website, or in any print material the school published, despite Meg's high regard and near celebrity among the students and teachers of the county.

Mitchell County Schools

North Carolina adopted a statewide school system with county governance (for white children) in 1839. Though Mitchell County did not yet exist at this time, schools in Yancey County served white children who lived in the parts of the Toe River Valley now known as Mitchell County. The Civil War abolished this system, though from 1865 – 1868, under the leadership of the Reverend James Hood, a Black man and assistant to the State Superintendent, programmatic schooling existed for North Carolina's Black

children. White children stayed home during that time period. In 1917, teacher certification became a North Carolina state issue, wresting educational autonomy from local communities and putting it in the hands of the state. Mitchell County has had a countywide school system, similar to its current arrangement, since 1952, if not earlier. With the exception of two districts in the state, all North Carolina school districts currently operate at the county level.

Today, Mitchell County Schools consists of nine schools that make up the public school system that serves the entire county. Greenlee Primary School (K-2) is just outside of Spruce Pine. At the site of a former high school in Spruce Pine, Harris Middle School (6-8) and Deyton Primary School (3-5) stand across the street from one another, tucked into a neighborhood just outside the heart of downtown. Bowman Middle School (6-8) greets drivers from the south into Bakersville, while Gouge Primary School (K-5) is nestled among some houses near the Bakersville Post Office. A 20 minute drive from downtown Bakersville, Buladean Elementary School (K-5) sits in fields out along the Tennessee border in unincorporated Buladean, swallowed by the Roan Mountains that rise behind it. Also a 20 minute drive from downtown Bakersville, the over-100 year-old Tipton Hill Elementary School (K-5) stands just outside of Cherokee National Forest; its large windows welcome light into classrooms. Halfway between Spruce Pine and Bakersville, Mitchell High School sits in the unincorporated community of Ledger, at the end of a lane home to Central Office, the ambulance service, the forestry office, and Mitchell County Social Services. The final school which is part of Mitchell County Schools is Mayland Early College High School, a partnership between the Avery, Yancey, and Mitchell County Schools and Mayland Community College, which is held at

the college's campus in Spruce Pine. In all, Mitchell County Schools serves approximately 2200 students each year.

Five of the eight schools in the county – the outlying schools and schools in Bakersville (Tipton Hill Elementary, Buladean Elementary, Gouge Primary, and Bowman Middle) – made adequate yearly progress in the 2009-2010 school year. Mitchell High School met all but two of its target goals, while the schools in Spruce Pine (Deyton Primary and Harris Middle) each met all but one of their target goals. Data is not available for Greenlee Primary School or Mayland Early College High School. (State Board of Education, Adequate Yearly Progress Reports for 2009-2010). When the most recent scores came out in February 2010, Dr. Brock Womble, Superintendent of Schools, reported that he "felt okay about the overall scores at this time" (Mitchell County School Board, 2010).

Anna Hicks McFadden and Penny Smith (2004) write that, by the 1960s, rural North Carolinian school superintendents were in prime position to exercise a great deal of power in their communities.

> Well educated by state standards, they hid their book learning behind a veneer of back slapping, jokes, and sports stories when it served their purposes. Often a politician or a newcomer to education politics would misconstrue their aw-shucks demeanor as a sign of timidity, and a lack of intellectual depth, only to lose more than a battle or two. These were men who used their perceived lack of guile with remarkable shrewdness. They knew the territory and knew each other. (p. 102)

Though noting significant changes in the organization of schooling and education policy since the 1960s, McFadden and Smith (2004) work from the premise that school leadership in southern Appalachia continues to operate in a very gendered, raced, and place-based manner that champions the success of those who continue to fulfill the affect offered in the preceding quotation. Of the 15 southern Appalachian counties in their

study, McFadden and Smith (2004) note commonalities among the 5 counties (Mitchell among them) that have *only* ever seen white male leadership, with few outsiders. (There was one woman principal of Mitchell High for a time being; the two current assistant principals of Mitchell High are women, as well.) All five of these counties, they note, are mountainous, and removed from the metropolitan area surrounding Asheville; have few major roads running through them, and no interstates; possess small economies; are small in size and population; possess large tracts of designated national forest or national park; are demographically homogenous, with fewer than 1% of the population non-white; are in the bottom quartile of the state's prosperity rankings; experience politics as "contentious, partisan, and personal" (p. 209); and are home to craft and folk schools (the Penland School of Crafts and the John C. Campbell Folk School) rather than four-year colleges or universities. Additionally, they note that these five counties also share a high stability of senior leadership, a paucity of central office staff, and a geographical unattractiveness to outsiders or people "from off" looking for career advancement.

There were 160 teachers in the district during the 2010 school year, though there were cuts made for the 2011-2012 school year. The school board is made of five members, all white men. There are currently 15 people working at Central Office, and it appears to be leanly staffed to accommodate reasonably for recent budgetary issues. The district used to have a Director of Technology; when that person left, the then Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Personnel absorbed the technology position, shifting personnel to the superintendent. Teachers, however, have borne the brunt of shuffling to meet student needs given budgetary restrictions; many of the teachers whom I have come

to know throughout the last year and a half have shifted grades or schools at least one time, never at their request.

Throughout the 2009-2010 school year, heated debates among the School Board ensued regarding the further consolidation of the county's schools. Until the start of the 2010-2011 school year, the two outlying schools in the county – in Buladean and Tipton Hill – served students K-8 in mixed-grade classrooms. Approximately 80 students attended each of these schools. Both of those small schools have been stalwarts in the community for nearly a century; the schools house medical clinics and community dinners, and are small, community-based hubs of activity.

On May 24, 2010, three weeks after a long and well-attended school board meeting during which representatives of the Buladean and Tipton Hill communities pleaded for the maintenance of their "small schools providing specially for our students," the school board voted 3-2 to shift both of these schools to K-5, busing the middle-grade students into Bowman Middle in Bakersville (Mitchell County School Board, 2010). Parents and community members cited both test scores and college entrance and admission as primary reasons to keep these outlying schools open through eighth grade, and one member of the board opposed to the consolidation suggested alternatives to the board's proposed plan including removing one teacher from each of these schools and combining a lead teacher/principal position at each. He was outnumbered. In a late March (2011) conversation about curricula that morphed into specific communities' needs to navigate curricula in particular ways, Dr. Morgen Houchard, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology for Mitchell County Schools, and I landed on the topic of the

shift in the county's schools. He reflected on the district's decision to pare the Tipton Hill and Buladean schools in this way:

> Politically, it's neither smart nor savvy to close schools. It's the one thing in school systems where board members don't get reelected, superintendents get fired, feelings get hurt. We have kind of limped along … we certainly want them to be schools, we believe in elementary schools in the communities – especially in Tipton Hill, that school sort of *is* the embodiment of that community – I mean, that school has been there for over a hundred years … Yeah, so there's a whole gamut of issues you face when you deal with that. I think we're gonna be forced to talk about closing or scaling back on one or two schools, when it comes down to it. And you simply have to bus children to another school. And they'll get a good education, and it'll all work out.

Morgen was the principal of the school in Tipton Hill prior to his work in Central Office, and I got the sense from his comments that he did not speak of closing, or paring, these schools lightly or solely as political decisions. Offering a counter-example to the oft-lamented detriments of busing students to larger schools, he cited a particular class he had come to know when working at the school in Tipton Hill, students who are now being bused into Bakersville to attend Bowman Middle. The entire grade consisted of nine boys and two girls; chuckling, he said: "and those two little girls were always stuck with those nine boys whether they liked it or not!" He commented that these students are quite happy at Bowman Middle because there are more people, more social opportunities, and more chances to meet and talk with other people. Primarily, however, Morgen cited resources as the primary reason to motivate and justify the possibility of any further scaling back or closure of one or both of these schools.

As of the time we spoke (March 31, 2011), the county had five art teachers. This had increased from two in his tenure with the district (and has since been pared to four, as Mitchell County Schools will replace Mitchell High School's art teacher with the art teacher from Deyton Primary School without hiring another teacher to take her place).

Tipton Hill Elementary and Buladean Elementary currently share an art teacher with Gouge Primary School – a limitation, he indicated, that could be eliminated should the schools be further consolidated.

A few resources are at the disposal of the school system: the Penland School's Teaching Artist Initiative, the Toe River Arts Council, and the Mitchell County chapter of Communities in Schools all connect the schools, teachers, and students to the resources of people, artists, mentors, and skills locally available. "Arts education is at the very heart of the Toe River Arts Council," reads the website, providing information on artist residencies, performances, teacher and artist workshops, musical workshops, afterschool programming, scholarships, and special projects. The Toe River Arts Council connects artists and their work to teachers, often bringing art performances and demonstrations to students at the schools. Each year, the Toe River Arts Council conducts 35 weeks of artist residencies in the schools of Mitchell and Yancey Counties. The Toe River Arts Council also provides afterschool arts programming for students in both counties. This programming is geared toward at-risk students, and where possible, has paired up with existing afterschool programming. The Toe River Arts Council provides an opportunity to showcase and exhibit student artwork in both of the counties, and also partners with other organizations in addition to the schools (such as the North Carolina State Theatre) to connect Mitchell and Yancey County students to art, artists, artistic processes, and resources for exhibiting artwork as well as continuing art education.

Communities in Schools hinges on what it calls the five basic needs of every child: a one-to-one relationship with a caring adult, a safe place to learn and grow, a

healthy start in order to have a healthy future, a marketable skill for beyond high school graduation, and a chance to give back to the community. Through their tutoring, mentoring, coaching, and other programs, Communities in Schools' volunteerism contributes an estimated $200,000 worth of services to Mitchell County Schools each year (Mitchell County School Board Meeting Minutes, 2010), and was powerful enough to lobby for a college counseling position at Mitchell High School (filled by someone through Communities in Schools). Furthermore, a number of teachers have developed projects that ask students to turn their own families and heritage as places to mine potential resources of pride, as well as skills.

A middle school teacher at Bowman Middle in Bakersville indicated that the perception of wasted, or ill-used resources, has fueled some tension among teachers. She taught at the school in Buladean for a year before she was moved to Bowman Middle three years ago. While at Buladean, she taught a combined seventh and eighth grade class. She recounted that when she switched to Bowman Middle, she perceived that teachers in Bakersville and Spruce Pine (at Harris Middle), resented the teachers in Buladean and Tipton Hill as "having it easy," or taking the "easy" jobs in the county. With class sizes of 12-15 at the outlying K-8 schools as opposed to the much-larger town schools in Bakersville (200 at Bowman Middle) and Spruce Pine (300 at Harris Middle), teachers at these outlying K-8 schools interacted with fewer students on a daily basis. Frequently, though, they taught (and still do teach) combined classes and multiple subjects, requiring a whole different set of negotiations and preparations around curriculum. In our conversation, Houchard indicated that communication among teachers was an area in which he and the district were trying to improve. A primary reason for

doing this, he explained, was to increase networking and the sharing of resources across grade-levels and between grades. Increased standardization, or, more accurately, uniform measurements, are also at the fore of his push for increased communication.

In terms of curriculum and instruction, the goals of Mitchell County Schools are two-fold: to bring teachers together *horizontally* across grades to discuss grade-level ideas and issues and to bring teachers together *vertically* between grades, particularly at school-transition points, to help ease students' and teachers' transitions to new schools, new curricula, and new teachers. Currently, the district's most organized effort to increase communication vertically is encouraging everyone – from kindergarten teachers on up – to not only attend graduation, but to dress in their regalia and colors and to *process* as official members of the graduation ceremony. Graduation in the spring of 2010 was the first time this occurred; in addition to Mitchell High's approximately 55 teachers (who all attended), 30 K-8 teachers robed and participated. A third grade teacher at Gouge participated, and told me that she was delighted – and surprised – to see one young man she had known as a struggling elementary school student walk across the stage at graduation. Morgen noted that teachers and administrators alike commented on the graduation of "our kids," a shift from "those high school kids."

Since Morgen came into Central Office in 2007, the district has been moving away from decentralized site-based management to a centralized network/hub facilitated through Central Office. Now, curricular decisions are made at the district level and implemented in the schools. The feelings about this development are mixed; mandated as they are by objectives put out by the state, the curricula the district selects appear relatively standard – it sticks pretty close to the published state objectives and can be

mapped and benchmarked with relative ease by the teachers and Central Office. To keep tabs on schools' and teachers' progress, Mitchell County Schools has begun benchmark testing periodically throughout the year. A Central Office idea, these tests were to be conducted on the computers – internet-style testing that was to grant relatively instantaneous results. The results for the first round of testing in the 2010-2011 school year, in the late fall of 2010, were far from instantaneous.

Though both Gouge Primary and Deyton Primary have the computers to handle computer-based testing, the internet connections are still telephone lines. Large tree-like trunks of telephone cables weave around a pole in Jennifer Cox's fourth grade classroom at Gouge. With these patchy and slow internet connections, students' tests loaded horrifically slowly and often crashed or failed when students tried to "send" them upon completion. Jennifer recalled one student sitting with his feet propped up on the table, dozing off as his computer sat, black-screened, after crashing for the fourth time. A test that should have taken one hour and yielded quick results morphed into an eight or nine hour nightmare of testing and technology. Jennifer attributed this nightmare to misunderstandings between the technological "advances" appealing to those in charge of a centralized curriculum and the actual reality of what was happening at the schools. This, for Jennifer, is merely a metaphor for the relationship between Mitchell County Schools' curricular choices and the day-to-day classroom work that happens in her colorful, chaotic, chatty, consistently questioned, and consistently high-scoring classroom.

Within this framework, however, principals and schools vary. Gary Moore, principal of Deyton Primary School in Spruce Pine, requires each teacher to print the

objectives she teaches on any given day on the board in her classroom, so that students and he can note the "objective" of the day at any point during a day or a lesson. Cal Calhoun, principal of Gouge Primary School in Bakersville, on the other hand, does not appear to require any kind of lesson plan or objective-writing from his teachers; Jennifer and other teachers at the school note that he trusts them to teach well.

Every teacher and administrator whom I have encountered articulates specific needs of their students that are rooted to the particular geography and economy of western North Carolina. While some allude broadly to the general challenges of self-confidence and sense of self-worth challenging in a locale often perceived to lack both economy and culture, some specifically name troubles associated with *pain* and poverty – drug use and alcoholism, abandonment, fractured and splintered families, low educational attainment, and the sometimes crushing reality of limited options and resources for life, work, and education beyond a high school diploma. Schools need to be "safe places," "stable places," and places where, for seven hours of the day, physical and emotional needs are assuaged, if not entirely met, because they are not being met otherwise for many students.

The economy plays an interesting role regarding the status of teachers in this community. For his 2005 doctoral dissertation, Morgen, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology for Mitchell County Schools, studied the correlation between principal leadership, teacher morale, and student achievement across seven schools in the district (he excepted Greenlee Primary and Mayland Early College High School). Houchard (2005) notes that previous studies of teacher morale around the United States report that teachers identified their low professional status in the community and little

community support of their work as the two "lowest morale" aspects of teaching. Interestingly, Houchard (2005) reports that teachers in Mitchell County rank professional status in the community and community support of their work among the "highest morale" aspects of teaching, while the lowest, across the board, is their salary.

I followed up on this anomaly with him in a conversation. "What's going on here?" I asked, curious about the distinction between Mitchell County teachers' responses and the trends other researchers have noted across the country. He responded:

> I don't know, and that's a good question. I think, I think - I think we are treated more professionally *here* than in a lot of places. Because in some communities – if you look at Bakersville, you know, most folks, when I wrote that dissertation, were working at Henredon furniture factories, and so I think you have a smaller group of what in Johnson City or Asheville or Chapel Hill would be professionals. So, you go to Chapel Hill and you have a huge density of physicians and lawyers and legislators, so I think in the professional ladder, teachers might rank a little lower than here.

"I am from here, I understand how to teach these kids." I have heard this sentiment many times over, from administrators and teachers alike. With so few teachers "from off," many educators in Mitchell County Schools have a deep insight of rural mountain culture and the needs they, as people who have gone away (at least to college) and returned, understand that their students – and their families – have. David N. Mielke (1978) compiled a volume in order to educate teachers new to the southern, non-coal Appalachian region (of which Mitchell County is a part) to the particularities to this place and the need to bring about relevant educational experiences for Appalachian children. This volume, I understand, was complied with the purpose of teaching those "from off." So many of the people whom I have encountered working in Mitchell County Schools are from the area – if not Mitchell County, then one of its surrounding southern non-coal Appalachian counties in North Carolina, Tennessee, or Virginia. They articulated needs

connected to the historical, social, and economic conditions of the area, in relationship to outside interests and perceptions, and with significant attention to important markers of life, including language, family, music, and religion.

Brandon Birchfield, a fourth grade teacher at Gouge Primary School in Bakersville, spoke of how, in order to survive, students here had to have something larger than Bakersville with which to associate themselves. Without that, he indicated, they would not have the kind of cultural capital or hope that they might need in order to sustain some of the blows and setbacks possibly headed their way in a small-town, shrinking economy. Brandon and I connected over his love of sports and my history tutoring football players during my time in the Southeastern Conference – he noted how having something larger than one's self or one's town (he used the example of Auburn, Alabama – a relatively small city in the southeastern corner of lower Alabama and its association with Auburn University) could be a resource for hope *and* create a sense of the world larger than one's 250-person unincorporated dot on the map.

Melora Bennett, a 16-year veteran of Mitchell High School and long-time Mitchell County resident (she grew up in next-door Avery County), noted the steely nature of mountain masculinity and how so many of her male students desperately needed, and *wanted*, a way of experiencing and communicating emotion and feelings. Describing one student's father, she said, "I understand; my dad is the same way." She described the need for students and their families to be able to come together to see the variety of family formations and myriad ways of expressing love and respect within families – to share with the remarkably high number of students she has this year from splintered families; many of her students this year do not know the name, or any

identifying information, of one of their parents. Both Melora and Tamara Houchard, a third grade teacher at Gouge Primary School in Bakersville, noted the hostility toward the Latino population and how fearful those students – and families – are of sharing *any* aspect of their family life or culture that deviates in any way from the "standard" mountain way.

Across the board, teachers and administrators noted that their students needed care, and a particular kind of care they articulated to be related to both the richness of the place while simultaneously necessary *because* of the place. Not surprisingly, given my affiliation with Meg, Penland, and the arts, each of the persons with whom I spoke addressed the arts as a vital process through which to provide students resources they would not otherwise have – resources of self-confidence and self-worth, certainly, but more interestingly a certain resource for thinking, problem solving, improvising around roadblocks, and generating possibilities for themselves when none appear to exist. Given the existing limitations of the place, as well as its richness, an artistic mindset (sometimes linked with entrepreneurialism), appears to be on the fore of many people's minds as they work, network, care, and prepare students in Mitchell County for what might come.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The previous chapters outline a general view of the conceptual and contextual issues that I engage throughout this project. In my exploration of the ways in which Meg's artistic work exists in tension with the organization of schooling, I have also thought deeply about my own artistic work and the tensions that emerged as I attempted to articulate that artistic work to the organization of *my own schooling.* As a result, part of this story is what researching *as an artist* means, when the performance of a research artist's work comes into tension with organization of the ways in which writing, research, and schooling are frequentlyconducted. I crafted the method for this project, which I describe in this chapter, in order to both study a phenomenon *and to engage* in the phenomenon as it developed. Research is craftwork. Like hand-crafts, research has potential as both art (something produced) and aesthetic (something appreciated). Like hand-crafts, qualitative research, in particular, often reveals the ways in which hands and material come together in order to shape something; ideally, that "something" is both useful and beautiful. Frequently, the "something" produced through research is both a troublesome product and one which betrays the humanness and precarity of the whole enterprise. Like hand-crafts, qualitative research is a media with rich communicative possibilities.

I began this project curious about the tensions that emerged as the performance of Meg's work became articulated to the organization of schooling at both the Penland

School of Crafts and the Mitchell County Schools. I believed her work to be a bridge between these two organizations which, despite proximal geography in rural western North Carolina, seemed to share little aesthetic, economic, or cultural space. I perceived that Meg worked as a kind of aesthetic, economic, and cultural liaison between these organizations and the community. By asking *what tensions emerge as the performance of an artist's work is articulated to the organization of schooling*, I sought to gain a better understanding of the inherent tensions that emerged as Meg navigated these differences between her work and each organization.

In Chapter One, I described the ways in which my work with a nonprofit educational organization shaped the guiding question of this study. The development of that question – of the tensions that emerge as the performance an artist's work is articulated to the organization of schooling – has other influences, as well. Before I outline this project's methodology, I want to attend to the perceived differences between the Penland School of Crafts and the Mitchell County Schools, because they significantly shaped the methodology I developed for this project.

In the last months that I worked at Student U, which I described in Chapter One, I participated in a collaborative arts integration project between the a few people in the School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a nearby rural elementary school. As a collaborating artist in this project, I was partnered with a fourth-grade Spanish teacher. Ideally, we would work closely with each other and her curriculum to develop arts-based ways to teach key concepts of the curriculum. Despite what became a friendly personal relationship, our working relationship was rife with tension. I understood the sanctions placed upon her and her classroom by end-of-grade

testing and the race to remediate students enough to make the ubiquitous goal of adequate yearly progress, but I did not *feel* them and the fear, ennui, and displeasure they induced. The curriculum for fourth grade Spanish in the state of North Carolina was so stripped – featuring *only* vocabulary words, including verbs, yet no conjugation – that in order to *do* anything interesting with the vocabulary state-prescribed curriculum she had to *deviate* from it. Furthermore, and perhaps most dispiriting, was her sense that the only way she could deepen her own teaching practice was to pursue a Master's degree in Spanish at a nearby university. She perceived the audit culture of schooling to curtail all possibilities to meaningfully deepen her work as a teacher in her own classroom.

I share this experience of a brief period of work as a teaching artist because together, my experiences in the organization of education, both in typical schools and educationally-oriented community and art programs, established my assumption that aesthetic processes and schooling processes were fundamentally different. Particularly in the pervasive audit culture that characterizes much of the conversation and practice around the organization of education in this country, whether that education is school-affiliated or not, I began this project expecting that discourses and practices of art-making in studios and student-making in schools would be profoundly different.

Though my experiences with Penland were limited prior to beginning this study, I sensed that despite the clear regard for Meg and the people involved in bookmaking held among the Penland School of Crafts and in the broader Penland community of artists, Meg's work as a teaching artist was located, if not outside, peripheral to the work of the Penland School of Crafts. The gallery space for Penland artists' work helped to cement my sense of the location of her work. During my first trip to the Penland School of

Crafts, I toured the large gallery featuring artwork made by Penland students, long-term Penland artists, and visiting artists and teachers affiliated with Penland. Much of the work was for sale, and much of it seemed to be more "art" than "craft." In a back room, there were some distinctly "craft" pieces: small handmade books and beautiful pottery pieces of all sizes. When in the main galleries amid the featured objects, I felt as though I was in a more typical art museum or gallery. Many of the pieces were stunning.

During a conversation with Meg that weekend, she showed me some of *her* art. Some of the pieces she showed me were her own paintings and books. I adore Meg's aesthetic; many of her paintings and drawings of nature seem as though new life has shot through the trees, infusing them with worship. Pulling them one-by-one from a well-used cardboard box, Meg explained the ways in which she used each of the pieces in the workshops that she taught in the schools. Interspersed with the artwork Meg made with her own hands were photographs of the artwork Mitchell County School students had made the previous academic year. She spoke about the work she made with her own hands and the work that students made in her workshops almost seamlessly.

Many of the pieces displayed in the Penland gallery were stunning, certainly. Looking through Meg's work with her, though, I was struck by the relationship that her pieces had with her, and her students', hands. The beautiful paintings and books that they made were *primarily for use*, not for display. Meg and students created paintings and objects *in the service of* the respective functions they would serve in their respective classrooms. The more that their artwork was used, the more value it gained – as a teaching tool, as a learning object, as a symbolic expression of an experience or curricula – those books could not be sold to a stranger for a price because the significance they

imbued came from their use. Beyond this, the blurred distinctions between what was *Meg's* artwork and the artwork of students and teachers who made books through her tutelage marked a contrast from the attribution of one artist's name to art objects displayed in Penland's gallery. The distinctions I noted between the gallery spaces reserved (and not reserved) for the typical work of Penland students and the Mitchell County students brought into Penland's fold *through* Meg's teaching artist work indicated to me that there would be tensions as Meg's work was articulated to the organization of education at the Penland School of Crafts.

Throughout this project, I paid particular attention to the discursive and material resources that persons working as artists, knowledge-creators, and organizational members called upon in order to perform, organize, contest, value, and negotiate various ways of working. In short order, I will elaborate on the particular ways in which I attuned my attention to those discursive and material resources while doing and interpreting fieldwork and interviews. I designed this project as a partial ethnography of *Meg's work*. Understanding her artistic work as a communicative phenomenon through which she interacted (and struggled against) two disparate organizations that both, incidentally, dealt with education, I expected to learn a great deal about the tensions that emerge when an artists' work is articulated to the organization of schooling. What I found, revealed in the chapter that follow, was more interesting.

Before delving into the specifics of this project's method, I must attend to one unexpected detail: during the research process, I learned how to make books. Though I might have anticipated developing skill in bookmaking (after all, Meg required that I participate fully in her bookmaking and art workshops with students), I did not foresee

the ways in which bookmaking as a craft and craft as a broader concept would ultimately inform this project's method. The negotiations that shoot through bookmaking and hand-crafts permeate this research method: tradition and improvisation, procedure and process, and performance and product.

In the Chapter One, I cited craft scholar Glen Adamson's (2010) assertion that craft products are the troubling outcome of the performative process of *making craft*, troublesome because craft products can be commodified in ways that the process cannot. John Dewey's (1934/2005) emphasis on art as experience rather than product parallels the tension between the live process of "doing" artistic work and its objectification as an art product. Similarly, the final products of a research process can often obscure the methodological approach and particular methods used in its creation, shortchanging the pedagogical possibilities of the research process. As such, throughout this project, I paid particular attention to the process of craft work and enabled that process to shift my method as necessary. Two pivotal moments in my own cognizance of the tense relationship between artists' work and the organization of schooling occurred around bookmaking.

The first moment occurred when, in the fall months of 2010, I found myself unable to make sense of this research in a typically-written format and began filling pages of the book I had made with fourth grade students. Throughout this research, I immersed myself in the often non-linguistic professes of art making, and struggled to render that aesthetic experience into written language – academic prose, at that. I started creating pages filled with drawings, collages, paintings, and ultimately, creative writing, all related to themes emergent in the research. The second moment occurred when, in the

summer of 2011, I summoned all I learned from Meg during the 2010-2011 school year in Mitchell County and taught my own bookmaking workshop to six teachers and sixty rising second- and third-grade students at the Children's Defense Fund Freedom School in Durham, North Carolina. Later in this chapter, I further discuss the ways in which these moments of bookmaking shaped my interpretative process for this project.

In the spirit of contributing to an ongoing conversation in research-craft, making more transparent the process of this particular piece of research – opening it further for your assessment and critique – I trace this project's trajectory from question to painting to interpretation to presentation. In this chapter, I discuss my journey to the work, its methodological assumptions and underpinnings, research design and methods utilized for data collection and interpretation, and how I worked to produce the chapters that follow.

Meeting Mitchell County and Meg

I arrived in Mitchell County with a varied history: three years of an undergraduate degree spent in schools and artists' galleries in a "revitalizing" downtown Indianapolis; two years in a Louisiana black box theatre studying performance studies and community while the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina revealed deep structural problems in both the systems of levees and social stratifications that supposedly kept the area "safe"; and four years of academic training in critical organizational studies while managing a year-round academic enrichment program for "at-risk" middle school youth. In studios, classrooms, organizations, and communities, I saw parallel tensions between structure and method on one hand, and creative and wonder-filled work on the other. Additionally, I saw the ways in which people used communicative, material, and aesthetic resources in order to shape their senses of self and to wield, ignore, negotiate, and to struggle against power, control,

and inequality. Put into the language of my current education, I would now describe my observations as tensions among structure and agency and the oft-conflicting machinery of standardized processes of organizing intersecting with persons' subjectivities and desires for aesthetic possibilities in their work.

I began to look at arts integration and the work of teaching artists as a potentially fruitful kind of relationship through which to pursue my emerging questions about the tensions and struggles I noted in those experiences in studios, classrooms, organizations, and communities. My choices to work with Meg and to trace her process as "the artist's" work central to the study were both strategic and fortuitous. I learned of the Penland School of Crafts through a progression of discoveries. Interested in the organization of experiments in progressive education and the arts, I read Martin Duberman's (1972) extensive history of Black Mountain College. A long-time academic and artistic home of Anni and Josef Albers, whose work I cited at the end of Chapter One, Black Mountain College came onto my radar because of its artistic legacy and its proximity to Chapel Hill. I discovered that Black Mountain College's late poet-come-potter M.C. Richards (who then taught at the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts) had loved a man named Paulus Berensohn. Berensohn, it turned out, lived in a small town in western North Carolina not far away from Black Mountain and still sometimes taught at the Penland School of Crafts. When I picked up a copy of Berensohn's (1972) book, *Finding One's Way with Clay*, his tactile descriptions of clay and craft and all of their literal and metaphorical beauty resonated with me. Fittingly, I met Paulus on the same day I met Meg – he is the Penland muse, community member, and longtime mentor of Meg's that I described meeting in Chapter One.

I arrived at the Penland School of Crafts with all the wrong kinds of artistic training and all the right kinds of questions. On one hand, all of my more-serious artistic endeavors prior to this project were performance-based – dance, theater, and performance art; I had no portfolio of art objects that I could catalogue. As I discussed in Chapter Two, while Penland has a deep history of community-based work and represents itself as a place where people can learn to live creative lives, its reputation and status arise from its maintenance of serious studio programs and the production (and sale of) interesting and innovative art. On the other hand, however, I arrived with questions about the artistic possibilities of communication and work and a curiosity of the ways in which working artistically produced and organized knowledge – questions that resonated with the work and pedagogy of Penland's teaching artist, Meg Peterson.

The duration of Meg's relationships with the Penland School of Crafts, the Mitchell County Schools, and the broader community of Mitchell County distinguishes her work from most established teaching artists. Though possibilities for teaching artists tend to be located in large urban areas (Burnaford, 2003), the rurality of Mitchell County actually helps to support Meg's long-term relationship with Penland, the Mitchell County Schools, and the people of the community. Meg has worked between arts and education in the county since she moved there in the early 1980s, and is highly regarded as an artist in her own right throughout the community.

Writing about what she calls "deep teams" between teachers and artists, arts education specialist Gail Burnaford (2003) argues that a teacher and an artist must work together for approximately four years before they can really learn one another's rhythms of working, pedagogical strengths and weaknesses, and respective disciplines. Arts-

integration relationships between teachers and artists trend toward the short-term; these four-year "deep team" relationship are desirable and yet a rarity (Burnaford, 2003). For the last six years, Meg has worked one-on-one with an average of 16 different teachers in five different school buildings across the county. Mitchell County Schools perpetually shuffles teachers between grades, schools, and subjects, yet Meg has worked with several teachers for the duration of the current iteration of her teaching artist work. Meg's relationships with many teachers currently involved in the bookmaking project extend beyond her bookmaking years and back into her varied and long history as a teaching artist in the county. Certainly, not all of these Meg-teacher relationships classify as "deep teams," but the duration of Meg's relationships certainly Meg's work with the community as very deep.

The duration of the current bookmaking project, Meg's presence in the schools, and her familiarity with the teachers, administration, and curricula of the third, fourth, and tenth grades, however, are nonetheless incredibly rich. Because of her rich history working as an artist and a teaching artist between various organizations with sometimes conflicting goals, and her own reflexive understanding of her practice, this study's investigation of Meg's work provides an uncharacteristically nuanced view into the tensions and navigations of artistic work in the organization of schooling. Additionally, Meg's positionality at the Penland School of Crafts provides a rare view into the relationships between the abstract images and lived work of teaching artists and professional artists, public school classrooms and studio space, and work as an artist, and member of both organizations and community. Organizations that "do" arts integration often function as artist clearing-houses, providing a means to connect schools and their

curricula to artists and artistic work. Meg's position at Penland is rare in that she is the sole professional teaching artist associated with an organization that hires many artists to teach studio courses for adults. Meg's work is more of an artistic organization of work in her studio and in classrooms across the county than a way of working "within" any particular organization.

Crafting a Methodology

I located this study at the nexus of Meg's artistic work and the organizational logics that shape work at Penland and work in the Mitchell County Schools. Meg's artistic work organizes experience, and that artistic organization of experiences is communicative. My methodological approach in this study is based upon dual assumptions: that communication significantly shapes our realities, and that Meg's work, as an artist, is a communicative process. Communication is at the forefront of this research because of its integral role in the structuring of both organizations and community (Eisenberg & Riley, 2001), but also because of its vitality as a pedagogy and its possibilities for beauty. James Carey (1989) describes communication as "a *structure* of human action – activity, process, practice – an ensemble of expressive forms, and a structured and structuring set of social relations" (p. 86, emphasis mine). To study communication, he writes, is to "examine the actual social processes wherein significant symbolic forms are created, apprehended, and used" (p. 30). This process is inherently social; despite an individualistic bent that leads us to believe that thinking and some scholarly activities are independent and isolated events happening within us, *thinking is public and social.* Thinking "occurs primarily on blackboards, in dances, and in recited poems" (Carey, 1989, p. 28). In this estimation, thought is not always immediately

discursive and functional; thought is a process of sorting out, experiencing, feeling, and listening: an engaged process. Thought happens through hand-work and in paste paint and in teachers' negotiations with too many growing bodies cramped into desks and curricula that don't fit quite right.

Activism, engaged scholarship, and community engagement: these words call forth a boundary-crossing, a threshold dance, or even a liminal space, perhaps, among spheres too-often separate from one another. Throughout this study - while doing research, interpreting data, and choosing how to represent and make sense of the work - I navigated institutional, discursive, performative and contextual boundaries as I worked to understand the ways in which Meg's artistic work intersected the organization of education in Mitchell County. Buzzwords like "interdisciplinarity" and "engagement" enjoy a current sexiness in the academy, but interdisciplinarity and engagement are necessary for reasons beyond fad. E. Johanna Hartelius and Richard Cherwitz (2010) assert that the most vexing problems facing us require interdisciplinarity and engagement because problems, as we know, are complex, requiring a multiplicity of perspectives and skills that reach beyond what any one of us is able to bring to the table. I agree with them.

The project of education, particularly education in a place such as Mitchell County where traditionally-held resources of money and professional clout are hard to come by, is a many-layered *problem* requiring a multiplicity of perspectives and skills that reach beyond what any one teacher, child, parent, organization, or artist can bring to the table. Meg's work in the schools is an interesting and potentially very valuable way of utilizing an outside-of-school resource in the project of education. As I later argue, Meg's rich artistic practice is an important symbolic resource for our critique of and work to

deepen the aesthetic and vocational the project of education *for teachers.* In addition to studying Meg's work, I hoped that the process of *doing* the work with others would occasion conversation and reflection that could help to both deepen and challenge (for better) existing practices in the county.

Many themes of recent conversations surrounding community engagement, engaged scholarship, and communication activism informed my aims and questions in the county. Recently scholars have advocated for engaged work while simultaneously problematizing the perceived unity of community (Dempsey, 2009), the imposition of university rhythms and temporalities on different modes of work (Cheney, 2007; Dempsey, 2009; Dempsey et al., 2010; Gunn & Lucaites, 2010; Hartelius & Cherwitz, 2010; Pezzullo, 2010; Swift, 2010), what "counts" as scholarship (Bowman & Bowman, 2010; Dempsey et al., 2010; Pezzullo, 2010), and for whom we do this kind of work. Recent research in communication engagement, sometimes also called communication activism, shaped my understanding of this project for two reasons: first, the politics of careful engagement and critiques of power common in better examples of this work resonate deeply with my own politics, and second, because Meg's work, the central phenomenon of this study, is *itself* a communicative engagement (sometimes framed as activism) in its own right.

As you will see, particularly in Chapter Four, these themes emerge as I discuss Penland's relationship with the schools and the community. Scholars are smartly and critically engaging some of the nuances of drawing distinctions around campuses and communities, theory and practice, thought and action, activism and scholarship. The tenor of the conversation encourages readers to engage social practices and problems

outside of the academy through both critical interrogation and intentional collaboration. As artists traverse organizations and ways of organizing with different, and sometimes competing, ideologies and practices of communication and work, they engage, learn, and grow their practices in order to create and to survive. The ways in which both researchers and artists engage in these acts of boundary-crossing also *organize* experience, perception, and knowledge-making. Just as different ways of working have different meaning and perceived value - for society and self - in everyday life (Braverman, 1974/1998; Clair et al., 2008; Gini, 2000; Sennett, 2008), different ways of working through thought, research, and data have different meaning and perceived value.

In this study, I sought to engage others in question asking, problem solving, and thought based action: inevitably contested, complicated, and rich with the possibilities for care-filled action and the generation of new knowledge. Though I approached this study understanding communication as central to the organization and structure of experience, I also paid careful attention to the artwork and the life in the studios, classrooms, and community. Art theorist Suzanne Langer (1957) claims that our frequent scholarly use of scientific methods to interrogate language demonstrates our ignorance of language's tricks – for, after all, "language is the material of poetry," (p. 148), she writes.

To me, Langer's critique is a reminder that language *and other symbolic practices* conjure the realities of the spaces and scenes we live. Langer's critique resonates with performance scholar Dwight Conquergood's (1991) admonition of the *text-centric* nature of most scholarly work. To resist this text-centrism, Conquergood (1991) insists that scholars write for multivocality and engage others in the field via the most salient

symbolic and expressive forms already in frequent use. His approach helps to expand the written possibilities for work that can sing, move, and perform.

In the classrooms and studios of Mitchell County, the most salient symbolic and expressive forms available were art-making, bookmaking, and teaching. Though I must (unfortunately) rely on the written word to covey much in this particular document, the language on these pages is largely informed by my aesthetic engagement in the work of art, bookmaking, and teaching alongside those in Mitchell County.

With this emphasis on communication as an embodied act, I made the intentional choice to participate in Meg's artistic work for a significant period of time prior to engaging in interviews with Meg, teachers, and staff members at Mitchell County Schools and the Penland School of Crafts. I took my cue from Meg, who insisted that the shoulder-to-shoulder arrangement of her studio workshops was a powerful way in which typical classroom arrangements of power were re-organized; I felt that I needed to experience this shoulder-to-shoulder work first-hand in order to better understand teachers' talk of the work later. I first observed students' end-of-year project reports in the third, fourth, and tenth grade in June 2010, and then joined Meg for 16 separate lessons in her Ridgeway studio and in Mitchell County classrooms from August 2010-February 2011 before ever conducting my first interviews in early March of 2011.

Making Art and Meeting Kids in Mitchell County

In May 2010, Meg invited me to stay at her home and join her during "evaluation week," the time at the end of the school year when she visits most of the third, fourth, and tenth grade classrooms across Mitchell County. "Evaluation week" is thusly named because it is a time when the Teaching Artist Initiative Program collects both qualitative

and quantitative data regarding students' work and teachers' perceptions of that work. Additionally, during this week, students make presentations of their books to Meg and their classmates. Elementary students are not graded for their presentations. For the high school students, these book presentations culminate their semester-long projects and represent a large percentage of their course grades.

I believe that Meg never would have invited me into such close proximity to her – and her work – if she sensed that our goals and sensibilities were incompatible or contradictory. That first week that I spent in Mitchell County proved a valuable introduction for Meg and me to one another and our ways of working. In addition, that first week began a yearlong journey to root me into the context of her work as an artist and as a teaching artist: Mitchell County, Penland, and Mitchell County Schools. Understanding that evaluation week was an incredibly busy and draining time for Meg, I tried to make myself as useful as possible. I sharpened colored pencils, baked for teacher meetings, helped pick dinner from the garden, carried books and boxes, and tagged along quietly.

Though I do not expect she would ever use this particular phrase, I think that Meg evaluated *me* during that first evaluation week: she closely observed how I comported myself with students, teachers, school administrators, and community members. One evening during that initial visit, I joined her at a home-repair course she was at the time taking at Mayfield Community College in Avery County. I have some familiarity and experience with home repair and construction, and jumped right into their work that evening as the class worked to panel a shed that they had built for the campus. That evening, I observed, cautiously questioned, and ultimately made a few pointed –

argumentative, likely – suggestions to her classmates as they debated various ways to make a few tricky cuts in the sheets of siding they installed around the building's doors. On the way back to her house that night, we laughed together about how I lost the fight with the men (all of her classmates were men) and then was justified when – as we attached the paneling – the hole I had warned them would be there *was there.* The laughter and frustration morphed into what became 15 months of conversations about tensions between working as artists, negotiating organizational expectations and stubbornness, and looking for resources of wonder in unexpected places.

Meg and I spent all of the subsequent evenings during that week sitting cross-legged on the floor of her home, talking about the books, her work on this and other projects, teachers' work, Mitchell County, and the schools. In some of those evening conversations, Meg and I processed what we had seen during the day and talked about the questions that we had for one another. We talked about the information that she needed to gather from the week and the pieces about the process that we were both curious about.

Meg had questions she typically asked during "evaluation week" in order to gather qualitative data for the Community Collaborative Initiative's reports (for grant work and future fundraising). Evaluation week is *notoriously* Meg's least favorite part of the year. This coupled with her generosity, curiosity, and trust, meant a good opportunity for me to meet students and teachers through questions. Understanding better than I the need to integrate teachers' and students' perception of my presence in the schools and studio with hers, Meg invited me to ask questions to students and teachers during these evaluation meetings. I had seen the implicit trust many teachers and students had for Meg and completely trusted her insights into how best to meet people in the county; I was

grateful for the opportunity to meet the project, the county, and the people in the ways Meg felt best.

Meg introduced me to everyone, students, teachers, colleagues at Penland as, "My friend Jes, from Chapel Hill," and then turned the floor over to me. In classrooms, after Meg introduced me, I told students that I was beginning to write a book. "You all know how to make books!" I exclaimed. "I see all of your beautiful books and hope that you will offer some advice to me; I have never done this before."

> *What do you learn when you make a book?*
> *Does it matter that you made a book instead of using someone else's book?*
> *What is the most important thing to teach someone about making a book?*

Students were full of advice and insights on the bookmaking process; Meg and I both found fascinating the parts they highlighted as "most important." Students, for the most part, were willing and excited to show me their books and pages of which they were proud. They explained *what* made them proud; their responses ranged from pleasure with their artwork, delight with a tricky or beautiful piece of nature math, or the prose or poetry on the pages they decided to share.

I enjoy and am good with children, particularly children who do not mind being asked questions. Watching me interact with their students and noting the ways in which I busied myself with small, supportive tasks during our time in the classrooms (casually sorting and sharpening colored pencils for students, for example), seemed to warm the teachers toward me. They asked questions about my teaching and studies in Chapel Hill, the research project, and where I was from. This introduction to teachers and their students proved vital throughout the research process.

Spending this evaluation week with Meg as I began this project permitted me to have a sense of where the students' work ended up at the end of their years working with Meg and their teachers. With this "preview" of where the next year's students might eventually end up with their products and thoughts about the process, I spent the summer eager to learn *how* students came to those "end of the year" places where I had just met them. With a sense of what was to come, I entered the beginning stages of bookmaking the following August with an eye to the ways in which Meg and teachers guided students toward the final product through the processes they taught, talked about, and engaged in at the beginnings of bookmaking.

I met Stacey Lane, the director of Penland's Community Collaborative Initiative, briefly one day during one of my initial visits to Penland. My presence was never questioned at Penland or in conjunction with Meg; it was clear that the Community Collaborative Initiative at Penland and the principals and teachers in the Mitchell County Schools trusted her implicitly. After Stacey ran into Morgen Houchard, the Director of Curriculum and Technology for Mitchell County Schools, Meg called me and said I should probably call Morgen and explain my project. I happily did so; he requested that I type up a brief letter introducing myself to parents in the district in case anyone asked who "the new person with Meg" was. Because the local community has a history of tenuous relationships with researchers "from off," Meg and I drafted the following letter to send to families in the school district to have both an informal and non-evaluative tone. In consultation with the Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Meg and I decided that the less-formal the research seemed, the more *likely* families would be to raise issue or concern, should any arise.

> Dear Families,
> As you know, your students have been – or will be – beginning work on the books that they will make this year with Meg Peterson. My name is Jesica Speed, and I'll sometimes be joining Meg and Adrienne, who is interning at Penland this fall, as they teach bookmaking to your students. I am a student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and am joining Meg, Adrienne, and your students because I am doing research on bookmaking and what it means for Penland and the Mitchell County Schools. I will only be here sometimes, as I live in Chapel Hill, but when I am here I will participate in the workshops that Meg and Adrienne teach. When I am here, I will pay the most attention to how students learn when they are making books. I'll be back and forth throughout the school year so that I can learn about each step in the bookmaking process. Sometimes I might take notes about what is going on in a class, to jog my memory later on. If I write anything based on my research (like a book or an article), I will not use any of your students' names. I have short hair and, when I'm in town, you can usually find me working at DT's in Spruce Pine or running along Little Grassy Creek in Bakersville. If you see me, please do not hesitate to introduce yourself; I'd love to meet you!

In addition to this narrative, I provided information about and contact information to reach my professors, the Institutional Review Board at UNC-Chapel Hill, and me. Ultimately, I did not intend to study the children, but I needed to be in classrooms to learn Meg's art and teaching and to observe the ways in which the worlds of art, school, books, and curricula collided. I chose to explain to parents and students that I was there to "see what happened" when students learned by making books because I did not want to appear to be an evaluator of any of the work that the students or teachers were doing in their classrooms. At Penland, Stacey Lane frequently told other staff that I was an "outside evaluator" for the bookmaking program, but the orientation of this project directed my attention to the tensions that bubbled up between artistic work and the organization of schooling rather than the quality, necessarily, of students' artwork (or teachers' teaching, for that matter).

I signed and submitted paperwork so that the district could run background check so that I could become an official volunteer. My "official" volunteer status was approved

at a September 2010 School Board Meeting, and from then on, as long as I was with Meg, no one in Mitchell County ever questioned my presence. Over time, I continued to be known by my relationship to Meg, but others' knowledge of my affiliation with her preceded her presence.

I arrived at Penland in August 2010 to "begin" the bookmaking process with Meg and Adrienne, who worked as the intern for the Teaching Artist Initiative from August – December 2010. Meg and Adrienne spent ample time over the summer preparing for this stage of work; an incredible amount of materials preparation is required in order to carry it out. From August 2010 through December 2010, I attended at least one day of each step in each of Meg's bookmaking workshops. Meg began her 2010-2011 school year with fourth grade students. With the fourth grade, I attended and participated in Penland tours, paste painting, cover gluing and construction, book sewing and page design, and pop-up design and creation. Nearing the end of her work with the fourth grade, Meg and Adrienne began meeting with third grade classes. With the third grade, I attended and participated in paste painting, gesso and inking, cover making and page selection, sewing and book construction, and cover scratching. For both the third and fourth grades, I was able to attend and participate in at least one lesson with nearly every teacher at Deyton Elementary and Gouge Primary. Between the schools, I attended and participated at least once in one of Meg's lessons with five of the nine third grade classes and six of the seven fourth grade classes.

Meg's work with the third and fourth grades stretched from August 2010 through May 2011, with the majority of book construction happening prior to the students' winter break and follow-up lessons (pop-ups, collages, complementary color lessons, cover

scratching, etc.) scattered throughout the spring months. Meg's work at the high school was arranged differently; she did two 10-day workshops with separate groups of students in the fall and another in the spring. All of Meg's work with the high school students was located at Mitchell High; with 90-minute periods, students are unable to travel to Ridgeway the same way that elementary students are able to be bussed over. I attended and participated in two painting lessons with two different high school classes, four lessons/work periods during various stages of book construction and page design, and two lessons in which students shared and discussed their completed book structures with Meg and each other.

At the outset of this project, I asked Meg how she wanted me to be, participate, or exist in her space with her students. Her only requirement was that I engage – that I not sit off and act as an observer with a clipboard. She had a particular disdain for the image of a clipboard-wielding observer in the corner of the classroom, preferring that I instead join shoulder-to-shoulder with students and teachers in the art-making process. The workshop atmosphere of Meg's classes is something upon which she places great value. In addition, Meg places great value on teachers working alongside their students. Though Meg teaches these workshops, she continues to work on her own artwork throughout each session. She wanted me to do the same. On days when I was at Ridgeway, I was always there with Meg and Adrienne when students arrived. Many of the fourth graders in the county remembered me from my visits to them the previous May, and Meg always put my name on the chalkboard in the classroom at Ridgeway. She continued to introduce me to students and teachers as, "My friend, Jes, from Chapel

Hill," allowing me to tell students a little bit about what I was there to do. I told students simply:

> When I grow up, I want to be a college professor. I have been in college for nine years … maybe longer! Before I finish school and get to be a professor, I have to write a book, just like you'll do in school this year. My book is going to be about what happens when students make their own books. Last year, many students told me that before I could write a book, I had to learn how to make one. So that's what I am doing – I'm learning how to make a book with you so that I can write a book like you're going to do, too. And I'm really excited, and if you have any pointers for me, I'm glad to hear them.

I believe that students and some teachers assumed that I had more art-making experience than I did. Throughout the process, students and teachers asked questions about painting and pop-ups and book construction – questions, really, which I (at first, in particular) felt very unprepared to answer. Using Meg's instruction from the lesson, I also jumped in from time-to-time as pseudo-teacher, reminding students to paint their backgrounds first, asking questions about the work they were doing, answering questions, helping hold paper, reminding of steps in various processes, helping to draw and cut obtuse angles, and other helping-type things with their art and construction. I paid close attention to Meg throughout, but began emulating her interaction style with students as I floated, asking and answering questions, noticing paste paintings that needed to be picked up and taken to the drying rack, and anything else to help maintain a degree of order in the studio space. Occasionally, following Meg's model and my own experience guiding art-making in performance studies classrooms, I found myself evoking artistic guidance and direction through questions:

> *Wow! Look at that beautiful tree! Will you tell me about it?*
>
> *What season are you painting? What do trees' leaves look like during spring?*

I have no visual arts training, and I was honest about this fact throughout. Though I come from a family of "makers" and identify as creative and artistic, everything that I learned about paste painting and book making, I learned from Meg. Interestingly, students and teachers alike frequently commented on my own artwork and "ability" that they perceived. I was relatively comfortable with experimenting with the paint, often (but not always) unafraid to make mistakes, and careful enough that my books were relatively well-crafted. And mostly, I learned from Meg and Adrienne.

Research Design

There are two main inspirations for this study: what critical organization scholars Mats Alvesson and Stanley Deetz (2000) call a "partial ethnography," and critical grounded theory methods outlined by sociologist Kathy Charmaz (2005, 2006). Throughout my research process, however, Meg and teachers and students all guided the questions I asked, how I paid particular attention, and my experiences of working with Meg's materials. In the process, I learned about paste paint, India Ink, book glue, gesso and "deadly dangerous instruments," which is the blanket name Meg gives to the sharp tools used in the bookmaking process, such as large darning needles students use to sew book pages to book spines and re-purposed potters' tools called "needle tools" that Meg has students use to punch guide-holes through which to sew their pages together. Ethnographic methods appeal to me, particularly in artistic and communal contexts, because they enable me to experience the imprint of the context on my body rather than just through the words of others. Language is an imprecise system, and elides the experiences of art-making, teaching, and researching that are felt, imagined, bodily, and excessive. Many of the descriptive elements that you have already encountered and will

encounter throughout the rest of the discussion are based on observations I made while participating in the process of bookmaking.

Distinguishing "partial ethnography" from its more-comprehensive cousin, Alvesson and Deetz (2000) argue that a limited approach is more transparent than a traditional ethnography. Rather than studying an entire cultural system, a partial ethnography takes into account the actions, the agents, the context in which it occurred, the purpose of its occurrence, and how it was accomplished in order to "explore the meaning of social phenomena, including forms of repression, not to count instances and make claims about frequencies" (p. 203). I was informed by Alvesson and Deetz's description to the extent that this study is an ethnographic exploration of Meg's organizing work as an artist. Because I was interested in the ways in which her work as an artist existed in tension with the ways of organizing encountered in and through the Penland School of Crafts and the Mitchell County Schools, *Meg's work* was the "core phenomenon" of all of my ethnographic work.

The sheer mass of empirical research is less than in a traditional anthropological ethnographic study; a partial ethnography enables the researcher more critical ground to interpret a particular set of questions. A partial ethnography, additionally, opens the possibilities for readers to see the ways in which a researcher conducted and constructed her analysis and insights in the collision of empirical and theoretical conversations. As I have worked throughout this process, I have tried to bring together pieces of Meg's practice, others' experiences of that practice and their own work, and conceptual elements that have helped me to interpret Meg's work and tensions that emerged so that you, the readers, can engage with those thought-processes. Rather than getting jumbled in

the mass of history and practice and ways of organizing experience of Mitchell County, Penland, and the schools, I used Meg's practice as the *heuristic* through which I could make choices about what to attend to and what *not* to attend to.

This study is not a "true" partial ethnography for two reasons: first, I developed three questions to help guide my attention toward particular phenomena in the sheer mass of empirical experience, and second, as I worked through the interpretation of experiences and interviews, I worked genealogically to connect salient themes that emerged with broader cultural conversations and practices with particular attention to power and control. Charmaz's (2005, 2006) updated take on a grounded theory approach was helpful to me as I worked through data, particularly because her updated approach activates a critical agenda (lacking in initial iterations of grounded theory). Applying a critical agenda to grounded theory can focus researchers' attentions to organizations and individual experiences in different ways than the grounded theory of the past (Charmaz, 2005, 2006). A critical grounded theory approach gave me the space to practice reflexivity and to acknowledge my own participation in the construction of data, performances, and the organizational settings – dialogic participatory and representational moves that resonate with my research ethic.

Placing these experiences, knowledge, and documents in conversation with one another, I have worked through this process iteratively to understand better the emergent tensions and possibilities in the work (Charmaz, 2005, 2006; Lindlof, 1995). Important to note, of course, is my own proclivity toward critical issues that Charmaz (2005) associates with "social justice" research: "attentiveness to ideas and actions concerning fairness, equity, equality, democratic process, status, hierarchy, and individual and

collective rights and obligations" (p. 510). A social justice orientation or, what I might call a critically-oriented approach to grounded theory methods, are data-driven inquiries that attend to "*resources, hierarchies,* and *policies and practices*" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 513; also see Alvesson & Deetz, 2001; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Grounded theory methods involve a careful collection and iterative and creative interpretation of multiple sources of data (Charmaz, 2005, 2006; Lindlof 1995). In what follows, I review the questions I developed to guide my attention in Mitchell County and the multiple sources of data I consulted in completing this study. These multiple sources, steeped in art-making as well as more traditional ethnographic methods such as participant observation and guided interviews, posed a particular interpretive challenge – the topic, incidentally, for the subsequent section.

Questions and methods.

To guide my attention in the classrooms and studios of Mitchell County, I developed three questions that helped me to better understand Meg's work, the context in which it occurred, and any tensions that resulted. I developed these in order to provide empirical touchstones as I sought to discuss the tensions that emerged as Meg's artistic work was articulated to the organization of schooling in Mitchell County. As I read and listened to historical and contextual accounts of Penland, Southern Appalachia, and craft traditions, census data, the organization's websites, and interviews with Penland employees and teachers and administrators in the Mitchell County Schools, the following question helped me to organize my attention. *What, if any, are the structures and communication practices of Penland and the Mitchell County Schools surrounding the*

development of curriculum and mission, implementation of that curriculum, and assessments of teaching and learning?

I used a large portion of this data to create the backdrop of Mitchell County, Penland, and the Mitchell County Schools which you encountered in Chapter Two. While I worked through the sheer amounts of historical and contextual data, I looked for emergent themes that would enable me to create a contextual outline for Chapter Two, a framework through which I could write the later chapters of this piece. The geographic, economic, educational, and aesthetic contexts of Mitchell County, its schools, and the Penland School of Crafts set an important tone for the discussion that unfolds in later chapters. Against the organizational and contextual frameworks I was able to build through the histories of Penland and Mitchell County Schools, I gained a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of working and teaching in Mitchell County through the interviews – experiences which became the basis for the more interpretive work presented in Chapters Four, Five, and Six.

My interviews with Mitchell County administrators and teachers and Penland employees primarily dealt with individuals' understandings of *doing their work* in these particular organizational contexts. As I previously mentioned, I did not begin these interviews until I had become quite steeped in Meg's work and developed relationships with teachers and students. Those relationships were borne in Meg's studio and in teachers' classrooms, and on a few glorious afternoons, in Ridgeway's back yard while students shared cacophonous lunchtimes and danced while Meg played the accordion for them. Because of these relationships and shared experiences, the interviews felt more like moments in ongoing conversations rather than punctuated "interviews." I did have a

loose agenda for the interviews, but the conversation often shifted to accommodate our personal experiences, conversations about specific students, whatever artwork either of us were working on at the time, and the time of the school year during which the interviews took place. Common to each interview, however, were these questions:

> *What does it mean to teach (or work) here now?*
> *What are some of the challenges to doing that work?*
> *Are you an artist?*
> *What's your history with teaching (or art)?*

In all, I conducted separate interviews with two Mitchell County administrators, five Penland employees, and four Mitchell County teachers. I interviewed an additional five teachers in a group setting, at their suggestion – they decided that they would like to use the time to talk about their work together (in Meg's presence) so that they could both talk to *me* and one another. The interviews ranged from 29 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes, for a total of nearly nine hours of recording. Often, the conversations began before I started the recorder and continued for long after the recorder was off.

When I interviewed Jennifer Cox, for example, a fourth grade teacher at Gouge Primary in Bakersville, we spent nearly three hours together. I arrived to her classroom at our agreed-upon time, and she was caught up in some work. I looked at students' books and the projects hanging around her classroom and we chatted as she wrapped up the project she needed to complete before our "official" interview. She had me turn off the recorder at a few points because of the nature of our conversation, and after I turned off the recorder at the "end" of the interview, she and I stayed in her classroom for an additional hour as I helped her clean up and arrange things for the next day. Throughout that time, though, we talked – those valuable conversations inform a lot of the interpretive work in the following chapters. By the time Jennifer and I met for our

interview in March 2011, I had already spent three days with her current students and a day with her class from the previous year. Because there are only two classes of each grade at Gouge, I had already met most of her then- fourth grade students at the end of the previous school year. In fact, by the time that she and I did our interview, I knew *all* of the fourth graders at Gouge. The afternoon I walked in to join her after school, I was greeted by name by no fewer than four students still lingering in the hallways.

My second guiding question helped me to develop my understanding of Meg's work. *How is Meg's teaching and artistic work a communicative practice?* I joined Meg as a student, quasi-intern, and co-teacher all wrapped up into one from August 2010 through February 2011. During that time period, I participated in 16 separate lessons spanning the third, fourth, and tenth grades. With the third grade, I joined Meg and the teachers and students for paste-painting, gesso and inking, cover construction and page selection, cover-scratching, and the student's end-of-year book displays. With the fourth grade, I joined Meg and the teachers and students for tours, paste-painting, cover construction, book sewing and page design, pop-ups, and the end-of-year book displays. With the tenth grade, I joined Meg and Melora and her students for paste-painting, cover construction, page selection and page design, book construction, their conversation about their finished (empty) books, and their presentation of their final projects (in the books) for English 10. Each of these steps I have just listed represents a lesson or class that Meg taught or facilitated in the schools (with the exception of the English 10 final project presentations).

Though Meg insisted that I participate fully as an art-maker with students, I also often, by proxy of my adultness, became a quasi-teacher. I frequently worked with

students, sharpened colored pencils, arrived early for set-up, and stayed later for clean-up. I often felt part of Meg and Adrienne's teaching team. At times, in fact, because I was more outspoken and comfortable as a teacher than Adrienne, I felt as though I might be overstepping her position as the *actual* Penland intern, and tried to intentionally defer to her when appropriate. (Moments when a child is about to unintentionally stab his neighbor's finger with a sharp needle tool, for instance, are no time for deference!) I occasionally found time during these lessons to make field notes, and recorded quick thoughts on my recorder on the way to and from Penland. Most of the notes that I took related to specific steps in Meg's teaching process, to particular phrases that she made over and over again, and to the ways in which her artwork and teaching functioned communicatively. This process left me with 20 pages of single-spaced field notes, three books, myriad paintings, and 11 art projects (that went into the book I made with the fourth grade students). Though making art is not a typical ways of recording fieldnotes, the artwork and the books were significant symbolic and performative engagements though which I gained a better understanding of the experience.

Making and teaching books.

Over the two years since this project began to unfold, I not only learned to cultivate a practice of thinking of myself as an artist; I also ended up making an art version of this very dissertation and teaching a bookmaking workshop in Durham, North Carolina. In the introduction to this chapter, I mentioned that my dissertation book and teaching bookmaking were both essential ways of understanding this work.

When I taught the bookmaking workshop, we had 60 second and third grade students in a stadium-style, high-tech Duke University lecture hall. The "tables" were

more laptop perches than the tables for which I had begged: long, thin rows of wood laminate positioned along the stadium steps. The chairs, with their new-looking upholstery, had to be folded up and removed before each lesson. Our improvised solution for aprons were large t-shirts, which soaked up the paint students gleefully splattered as the director and I looked on, wincing at the thought of the carpet underneath a thin layer of newsprint absorbing the globs that fell to the floor. Through this seemingly cleanly-minted intellectual landscape, I carted tubs of water and gallons of richly pigmented paste paint I cooked, mixed, and plated in the kitchen and along the floors of my house. The only sink available was up two flights of steps, in a public restroom, with an infrared faucet. Our sessions were cut from an hour and a half to an hour at the last minute. The teachers were brand-new to these students and many of them were college students whose interest in education and social justice had not yet bred the kind of resolve, patience, and vigilance necessary to safely corral the energies and bodies of summertime seven- and eight- year olds into anything other than chaos. But as Meg said later that summer, it was also a necessary part of my research: "It was probably part of your work, doing that. You just learn by doing." We improvised around the challenges, left only a few permanent stains on the lecture hall carpeting, and students took pride in their delightfully completed, boldly-painted books.

Not only was the *doing* part of the work, it was a good reminder that my proclivity for jumping into art-work also characterizes Meg's work in Mitchell County and Penland. This portion of a conversation she and I had in the early August days of 2011 characterizes her relationship to her work and method. This conversation picks up as Meg summarizes how her work in the county began.

Meg: It was a mixture of me just coming to this area and doing this work as an artist in residence in the schools and getting known, that way. And then it was working at Montessori school, and then it was this director who was a young parent who was really devoted to what Penland could do. And people in the school system being receptive to that. I mean, I came here wanting to be an artist but also wanting to teach. I think I've talked to you about being really clear as a young person that this is what I would do. I wasn't sure that being a public school teacher and being certified was really the right path for me. I thought it was more appropriate that I sort of walk that line between artist and teacher and let the two sort of … let my awareness of both areas help the other. But there was kind of no question that this is what I would do. And what was interesting is how unthwarted I was. I mean, I just … I didn't ever make much money, but I always made enough. And I could just keep asking questions. What about this? How do you do this? Can we try this? I don't know if you've been in points in your life when doors just kind of open for you, creatively, but it's really just kind of cool. It's how my worklife here has mostly been. Just, "Ah! Try this one. Let's try that. Try that idea." I think it's neat for me now to kind of keep orbiting doing the same thing, and refining my thinking about it within that orbit. As opposed to different projects – I mean, I taught everything. Maybe not photography. Maybe not screen printing.

Jes: I remember you talking about making 200 pounds of gingerbread dough in your kitchen. For gingerbread houses. For a math class. Was that pretty typical?

Meg: Uh huh. Or globes. How the hell with third graders, do you help a third grader understanding the spacing of the continents on a round surface? How do you communicate that? I've run into very perplexing questions. Making papier maché globes was one of them.

Jes: How did you do that?

Meg: Oh my God. It was diabolical. It was absolutely diabolical. Giving kids giant Xeroxes with the continents drawn on it, but it's flat, and you have to compensate for the fact that the globe is round. And teach about the prime meridian, and the equator, and two dimension into three, and they're in third grade, and …

Jes: But it's so rich!

Meg: It is so rich. And that has been part of the pleasure, of getting yourself – like you, with the Durham project – getting yourself into a hole and figure out how to get out, and it's interesting. It's never boring. It's interesting! I don't want to martyr myself to that cause, though, but it's cool. You never know what you're getting yourself into when you sign up for a project. Oh, I'll make gingerbread houses with a hundred third graders. Or globes. Or … third grade Deyton has always been the place where some of the wildest learning has always occurred. And Montessori. Montessori was a really satisfying job. Not financially, which is why I stopped. But creatively, it was just so satisfying. Because the teachers, I basically would plug into their literature or their science or their social studies, and I would do things connected to those. To bring whatever their studies were alive. Every week. For six years with any given student. And so within that context I would make sure that they stitched, and that they drew, and that they

> painted, and that they sculpted, and that they collaged, and made puppets … I made sure that they did skills with different media, but then it would be in service to this holistic way of learning. And that was just deliciously fun. And that's all background for what I'm doing.

Certainly, I made the books because it was one of Meg's conditions of my presence in her classrooms. But making the books, and particularly working in *my* "North Carolina" book (like the books that the fourth grade students made) became a significant relational, symbolic, and interpretive tool. Fed up with my seeming inability to translate art-making into words on my computer screen, I followed Meg's advice to the fourth graders: "Make your North Carolina book into *your story of North Carolina."* My (western) North Carolina story was almost entirely dissertation-related; as I began to thematize things to write about, the story of the dissertation began shaping itself:

> *Appalachia, artist, beginnings of bookmaking, bookmaking, Bakersville, craft, courage, creativity, Deyton, expression, experience, Episcopal Diocese, fog, forsythia, Gouge, hands, horizon, Hostel in the Holler, interviews, iteration, Jes, lunchtime, liturgy, Lucy Morgan, Meg, mountains, Mitchell County, mindfulness, noticing, name game, opposition, optimism, problem-solving, Penland, Ridgeway, structure, school consolidation, Subs with Suitcases, tire swing, Teaching Artist Initiative, use-value, vision, weaving, wonder, yearning, Zeus.*

By working in my book, I was able to let my *hands* think about the work, what it meant, and what it could mean. My hand-thinking work in the book I made helped me to engage meaningfully in the symbolic and expressive forms of the classrooms and studios in Mitchell County, as Langer (1957) and Conquergood (1985) recommend. My hand-thinking and book-making work informed the sentences that I have typed onto these pages.

I worked on the book at Penland and in Chapel Hill, finding that the uniformity of the symbolic form helped me to transition between the immersion in the mountains and the disconnect I felt when I came back home. The book became a significant part of my

interviews with teachers, in particular, and a manner through which I could broach the subject about *them as artists* and their fears of being an artist in an unthreatening manner. You see, teachers knew that I was *not* an artist, and yet I brought this *book* that I was, in Meg's words, "living into," for them to see. More often than not, teachers pulled out their own books to share with me during our interviews, or pulled out books of their students' with which they were particularly pleased. Occasionally, teachers would not show their work to Meg when we were in classrooms together; I think that Meg's position as "the expert artist" *and* her magical teaching practice made showing their artistic work – on the page and, perhaps, in front of the class – feel a little too risky. They may have also been embarrassed that they had not worked in the book as much as they sensed Meg would have liked. But I wasn't an artist; I was a student, or a writer, or Meg's friend, or … someone … who wasn't an artist but who cared about their kids, helped in their classrooms, and was interested in their abilities as teachers.

The book helped me to build different kinds of relationships and conversations with teachers than I would have otherwise been able to have. Additionally, making my book symbolized a reciprocal act of care and appreciation toward Meg, which performance scholar D. Soyini Madison (2005) insists researchers to do in critical and dialogic research. One of Meg's primary goals in her teaching and artistic work is to help people live into their own experiences, and one of her greatest frustrations with the book project is that teachers often do not make and live in to the books that they make with their students. I believe that Meg took great pleasure on the fact that I was living into – using – one of my books. Through my experience with the book, I was able to speak of my experience of *living in it* with teachers and administrators who have worked *in* a book

(many have made the book structure), unwittingly advocating for the kind of engagement with bookmaking that Meg wishes every teacher and administrator needs to have in order to get the value of the process.

The third question I developed to guide my attention helped to move me into the interpretative process from which the rest of this project springs. In order to discuss how I worked to create a response to that question, I will move to a conversation about the interpretive process I engaged to produce what you have been – and will – read.

Interpretation and Conversation

How does Meg's work with Penland and Mitchell County Schools 1) exist in tension with their structures and communicative practices surrounding curriculum, teaching, and learning; and 2) generate resources for communicative practices surrounding curriculum, teaching, and learning? I initially asked this question because I knew that it would lead me to explore the ways in Meg's work existed in tension with the organization of teaching and art-making in the Mitchell County Schools and the Penland School of Crafts. What I did not anticipate when I asked the question, however, was the multivocality and fragmented nature of the data I would gather along the way. Though these three questions and a theoretical methodological framework undergirded this work, my process evolved in a somewhat muddled fashion over the course of two years' worth of research, conversation, questions, and artwork. In a way, a lot of the interpretive work for this project happened while sitting cross-legged on the thick rug covering the floor of Meg's living room, while making artwork, and while teaching bookmaking workshops in Durham. How does one write through those experiences in any kind of interpretive

fashion? With the kind of integrated methodological approach I took for this study, the outcome was inevitably an

> inquiry into social reality in a way that takes into account that the reality is shot through with a mosaic of different realities and that our research is part of the processes forming this social mosaic or a "patchwork quilt." (Saukko, 2005, p. 354)

Though many discuss critical ways of approaching research, interpreting and presenting research is always a particular challenge. A piece entitled "Finding a Method for Curriculum Research" by curriculum theorist Madeleine Grumet and her former students, education scholars Amy Anderson and Chris Osmond (2008) helped me to find my footing. Grumet et al. (2008) outline a three-pronged approach to working with curriculum: curriculum as a cultural object/artifact, with a cultural and philosophical history; curriculum as an event, with a lived experience and a fleetingness; and curriculum as something *I* encounter in the process of coming to it and living it and making sense of it, with an autobiographical or experiential primacy. Ultimately, theirs is a multi-modal approach to studying curriculum, working with curriculum as a cultural object through work with historical and philosophical contextualization, curriculum as an event through ethnographic methods and performance theories, and curriculum as autobiography through narrative, interrogative writing.

Chris Osmond (Grumet et al., 2008) writes: "How was I to explore a theme as personally resonant as this one without overwriting the experiences of others?" (pp. 148-149), describing his personal drive and – it seems – need to write about the experience of teaching. He describes the need to write *through* his differences of opinion about pedagogical choices teachers made as he worked through his analysis rather than claiming an ethnographic distance of "reporting," though this was difficult. This kind of

ethnographic detachment was antithetical to what he wanted to do, yet he found himself falling back into it in order to avoid working through the contradictions between what he believed to be good pedagogical choices and some that the teachers – his co-researchers – were making. Describing the process of doing this work, he cites art theorist and philosopher Suzanne Langer's (1957) writing on the dynamic form (for which she uses a waterfall as an illustration): "What gives any shape at all to the water is the motion" (Langer, 1957, pp. 47-48). Following the image of this dynamism, as I wrote about teachers' and workers' interpretations of their experiences I also wrote short vignettes about my own experiences. Some of those experiences happened in Mitchell County, and many happened long before I landed there. Instead of using my own experiences as the frame through which I judged the choices that happened on the ground, I decided to layer my stories throughout the writing as both a way of honestly acknowledging my own presence and subjectivity in the work and as a generative way of bringing multivocality to a form of writing that can easily become monotonous.

Gallery space.

Curriculum as object, event, and auto-biography mirror, in a way, the three kinds of validity communication and cultural studies scholar Paula Saukko (2005) identifies as necessary for rich cultural studies research: contextual validity, dialogic validity, and self-reflexive validity. She writes:

> Not only does cultural studies benefit from contextualization but contextual analysis also benefits from being aware, in the dialogic spirit, of local realities that may challenge general analyses as well as being self-reflexively conscious of the political nature of its analysis. (p. 346)

In sum, I worked to create a *conversation* among various texts, contexts, experiences, and subjectivities as I wrote *to* and *through* the ways in which Meg's artistic work came into

tension with ways of organizing work, value, and experience at Penland and the Mitchell County Schools. In a revealing moment of frustration that I recorded in my fieldnotes, after reading Grumet et al.'s (2008) article, I wrote honestly about the struggle for a method of interpretation, of translating experience into language:

> I should note that part of my troubles with this project, and research, in general, is that I have been intuitively following this kind of method without being able to articulate it as method. In other words, I have been doing this on instinct and for this dissertation have been trying to select a monolithic strategy of doing and making and living research. Unfortunately – or fortunately, as it turns out — this is not a mode in which I can operate for very long without getting completely bored. The theoretical and cultural histories of places, problems, and practices are interesting to me for a while, but I lose interest when I cannot experience what they might do in the world, which is why I so often am drawn to practical problems in which I can touch and try and attempt an impact or some sort of participatory intervention into something going on. I get bored with this, however, as well, when it's not put in conversation with something larger than its specific existence and moment (embedded in its own cultural and philosophical histories). I am woven throughout all of this work, drawn to certain areas and not others, loaded with an arsenal of books on my mind's shelves, and at heart an artist whose desire for improvisation and beauty is fueled by a need for aesthetic communion with others and this world around us - replete with possibilities for creation if only, and when only, we pay attention with our brains and hands and others and are willing to risk radical openness.

As I worked to craft a method, the *craftsman* became an important figure for me. Art theorist Howard Risatti (2007) pinpoints craftsmen's relationships to their material as a defining feature of their work. The craftsman brings forth, drawing out or *educing* a form capable of performing a certain function, but knows that without honoring the quirks of the material – the tensile strength of the steel or the grain of the wood – she will not be able to craft an object that is functional and simultaneously unique and beautiful. This description is characterized by a distinct responsiveness in *relationship* with function and form, not the freely-floating, isolated artist working outside of relationships to those pragmatic elements. This project is steeped in close relationship to the material, and yet

through my impact and influence both in Mitchell County and now, on the page, I am inexorably written all over it. With careful attention to form, function, and aesthetics, though, I have worked to create something that has use-value as well as beauty.

For artists' work, the gallery is a place of sharing, of continued conversation, and of exchange. It is also a place of yet-again-had experience as you encounter the work framed differently. Despite my initial assumptions of the relationships among the Penland School of Crafts, the Mitchell County Schools, and Meg's mediating work between them, I was surprised by the similarities, distinctions, attributions of creativity and art-work, and the outright and unwitting rejections of aesthetics and community. The next chapters are a place of sharing, of continued conversation, and exchange. Like the yet-again-had experience of the artist in the gallery, the act of writing and re-reading these next chapters has framed and partitioned the experience or research differently than the initial encounter of hand and material in classrooms and studios. Like the artist who hopes that the gallery-viewer will find something surprising in her work, surprising whether in provocation, in delight, in complexity, or in some combination of the three, I hope that as you enter the gallery space of these forthcoming chapters, you find space for your own surprising knowledge-making as your own worlds come into relationship with the very threads of narrative and interpretation I offer.

In the time that my active involvement in Mitchell County needed to come to a close, I attended two years' worth of end-of-year meetings with teachers who spoke as though they assumed I would back the next year, and could walk down hallways in elementary schools in Mitchell County to friendly choruses of "Jes!" and greetings exchanged with students, teachers, and principals. In June 2011, I spent 10 or so days in

Mitchell County. I occasionally met with teachers during that time, but mostly, I wrote. Over a perfectly still-spring June weekend, I hiked the Appalachian Trail along Carver's Gap, up on the Roan balds above the Buladean School. I came back to the county in time to attend a Saturday night talent revue sponsored by Communities in Schools at Mitchell High. A teacher with whom I had eaten dinner earlier in the week sold me a ticket; I looked forward to hearing some of the local bands I had heard so much about. Galleries can take many forms.

People from all over the tri-county area performed – from clogging small kids to guitar-strumming octogenarians – it was nearly a full-house affair in the Mitchell High auditorium. Many of the district teachers who I had come to know were there, as were students who had become used to seeing me in and out of their classrooms. The exposition clogging team performed; the smallest clogger on the exposition team was a bright-eyed third-grade slip of a girl whose classes I had joined several times with Meg. After performing, she slipped into a seat directly in front of mine. I tapped her shoulder during a pause in the next performer's act. When she turned around, I whispered a smiling, "You were great!" She thanked me, turning back to face the stage.

A second later she turned back around with a surprised grin of recognition: "I'm working on making my book beautiful, Jes."

"Me too," I responded.

Chapter Four: Contouring Professional Practice

> Institutional practices are historically produced and as such are imbued with and reproduce power differences and advantages. Everyday experience in that sense is thoroughly political. The politics is not in the competition of experiences but already *in* the experience at hand, the person and perception produced. Every building, every sidewalk, institutionalizes a point of view, a point of view sedimented out of the politics of the moment of production; each use reproduces the view of the "winner" of that decision process. It's not that the user must do so, though sanctions and rewards may encourage it. It is in the habit, the routine, and the thoughtlessness that it is reproduced. But this is not to say that it is neutral or innocent. The configuration of routines and other practices leave it inevitable and necessary. And the thoughtlessness and routine are actively protected from thought and alternatives. (Deetz, 1992, p. 128)

Despite my expectation that the Penland School of Crafts and the Mitchell County Schools would exist as two relatively separate organizational and discursive spaces, I was surprised to find that a *preoccupation with professionalism* emerged in both. As Meg's performance of her artistic work became articulated to the organization of schooling at the Penland School of Crafts and the Mitchell County Schools, tensions emerged among *artistic work* and *discourses of professionalism.*

I first began to see "the professional" emerge in the histories of Penland. Penland shifted from the Penland Potters and Weavers reviving a local craft and generating income for women with little economic opportunity in the harsh rurality of southern Appalachia to today's nationally-reputed Penland School of Crafts, a high-craft mecca in the romantic wilderness of the southern Appalachians. This shift was described as "professionalization." The often overlooked controversy of former Penland director Ken

Botnik's quick removal after securing money for the Community Collaborative Initiative occurred in the midst of Penland's move toward the professional. I became suspicious that Botnik's designation of this money for a community initiative enacted a vision of Penland that competed with the future-leaning professionalization that Bill Brown brought to Penland during his time there. In and around the Mitchell County Schools, "professional development" was a common and tossed-away phrase: any number of the activities that teachers do can be categorized as "professional development." Interestingly, however, despite the ample language of "professional development," I started to notice that teachers expressed a desire to be seen as "experts." Two teachers explicitly named "expertise" as the desire that drove them to get Master's degrees, while several commented that they admired Meg because she possessed an expertise in her work that they did not feel they had – or could have – in their own.

"Building expertise" is tied to the creation of a profession – both because of the developing communal standards of ethics, practices, and governance, and because the legitimization of the work that goes hand-in-hand with increasing its visibility and recognition (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Expertise and professionalism are not synonymous, but professionalism is a mechanism which helps to grant expertise its authority (Fournier, 1999). Sociologist Raf Vanderstaeten (2007) argues, however, that many occupations now require specialized, expert knowledge: law, medicine, theology, and education, certainly, but also nursing and carpentry and web-design and machine-tooling – occupations that fulfill the requirement of specialist knowledge yet fall outside of the realm of typically-conceived "professions."

I was recently in a seminar with a former teacher; for a while, we discussed teaching and professionalization. She shared that she had often desired for teaching to *be* a profession, because it would raise the status of teaching. While recognizing my position as a person who chose not to teach in K12 education, I pushed back, arguing that, as a construct for understanding the work of teaching, professionalism undermines the possibilities of what teaching is and could be. Understandably frustrated with me, she responded: "Well if teaching isn't a profession, what is it?" I responded, simply: "It's work." This sense that teaching *must be something else* in order to have value diminishes the very work of teaching itself. Teaching, after all, is work unlike any other kind of work. psychologists, lawyers, doctors, and lawyers, all professionals, possess an autonomous expert knowledge to which we, as clients, can submit ourselves in order to solve particular problems beyond our particular reach of knowledge and expertise.

Expertise, authority, knowledge, and power are all tied up in professionalism (Foucault, 1984). Expertise, authority, knowledge, and power become even more linked and occluded as professionalism becomes a metaphor for all kinds of desirable communicative, subjective, and material ways of conducting oneself at work in relationship to society. Performance scholar Peggy Phelan (1993) describes metaphors, when used to place a dominant meaning on a less-dominant body (or in our case, way of working), as hierarchical tools for erasing difference. By using professionalism as a metaphor for the work that we do in classrooms and studios and schools, for instance, we erase the differences and productive tensions between the old image of professionalism (to which we still cling) and the embodied and excessive realities of what it means to do the work that we do. In this chapter, I explore the various uses of professionalism in both

the Penland School of Crafts and the Mitchell County Schools and the ways in which professionalism enables and constrains different meanings and practices of work, particularly *aesthetic* work.

The Professional

Many organizational scholars write about professionalism as a locus for our concerns about who we are and what we do, both at work and in society (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007;Cheney et al., 2010; Clair et al., 2008; Eisenberg, 1995/2007; Fournier, 1999; Meisenbach, 2008). Professionalism enables and constrains people not only *at work* but also in relationship to larger society, by shaping the ways in which what they *do* has meaning about *who they are* (Cheney et al., 2010; Fournier, 1999; Meisenbach, 2008). In Mitchell County, discourses and practices of professionalism not only enable and constrain people at work and in relationship to society; discourses and practices of professionalism enable a certain posturing and valuation of oft-denigrated work (teaching and art-making) while simultaneously constraining the very aesthetic possibilities of that work.

Organizational scholars George Cheney and Karen Ashcraft (2007) begin their history of work on professionalism with Emile Durkheim's (1974) observations that a burgeoning professionalism on the cusp of the 20th century separated preindustrial societies from modern ones. Professionalism pervaded not only ways of working, but ways of relating in culture and society. Durkheim frames professionalism communally, emphasizing its role as a cultural construct rather than an individualized phenomenon (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Professionalism, as a separator between preindustrial and modern society, then, comes to "stand in" for words like "legitimate" and "civilized,"

framing ways of working that are not professional as, therefore, illegitimate and uncivilized. Though "professional" and "unprofessional" do not necessarily translate into "civilized" and "uncivilized" today, there is a certain degree of institutional bias that is mobilized through the use of these words. As critical organizational scholar Stanley Deetz (1992) writes in the opening quotation of this chapter, the mundane use of this term in the everyday lives of the organization of schooling is "thoroughly political" (p. 128) because of the inherent paradox in professionalism's oeuvre. Cheney & Ashcraft (2007) argue that the pervasiveness of professionalism as a value has created "work sites and jobs not typically deemed professional, wherein members nonetheless strive for professional conduct and status" (p. 161).

As teaching and art organizations, neither the Penland School of Crafts nor Mitchell County Schools are innately professional. Both organizations articulate a desire to work toward some kind of qualitative, and perhaps aesthetic, ideal: Penland strives to "teach people how to live creative lives" (Penland, 2011) while Mitchell County Schools defines its mission to "collaborate with families and community partners to provide a safe, caring, and engaging learning environment that prepares graduates to become responsible citizens in a diverse, global society" (Mission, Mitchell County Schools, 2011). Although these forms of work may never be *professional*, there exists – both in Mitchell County and broadly, across many forms of work – a fear of doing such work *unprofessionally*.

Writing about professionalism as a "software of control" (p. 292), organizational scholar Valérie Fournier (1999) asserts:

> the appeal to professionalism serves to "responsibilise" [sic] autonomy by delineating the "competence" of the "professional employee" by instilling

> "professional like" norms and work ethics which govern not simply productive behavior but more fundamentally employees' subjectivities. (p. 293)

While the professional is desirable for its status, its association with expertise, and its predictability, the professional also provides a governing mechanism through which our very ways of working are shaped and often constrained (Braverman, 1974/1989; Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007; Cheney et al., 2010; Clair et al., 2008; Eisenberg 1995/2007, 2007; Foucault, 1984; Fournier, 1999; Gini, 2000; Willis, 1977). Not only does professionalism and its promised mobility function to produce particular types of subjects (Foucault, 1984; Willis, 1977), it can also, in the case of relationships between organizations and the public, be a real harbinger of dialogue between persons from different organizations and the populations that organizations might seek to serve (Eisenberg, 1995/2007).

In order for a non-professional activity or kind of work to become "professional," it must become established through some kind of group recognition; the recognition is often economic. Multiple gendered, raced, socioeconomic and political factors influence the development of a profession (Cheney et al., 2010; Fournier, 1999; Gini, 2000; Vanderstaeten, 2007). Writing specifically about the professionalization of education, sociologist of education Raf Vanderstaeten (2007) illustrates that the elevation of teaching to semi-professional status depended on the organization of teacher training at the university level. This separation of teaching from mothering and caring and home-work is the critique of the organization and scholarship of teaching that Madeleine Grumet (1988) offers in her book *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching.* Teaching, so long as it was associated with the feminine work of the home and the economic paltry of domestic work, is inherently non-professional work.

Vanderstaeten (2007) argues that the professionalization of teaching impacted education in schools, certainly, but also education in the home and family. As teaching became professionally organized into "educational organizations," the expectations of family's roles in teaching and learning became more and more auxiliary. In the organization of schooling, the organization itself is frequentlycharacterized as progressive, associated with constant "innovations," "reforms," and "updates" in response to a changing world and changing needs. As the organization is characterized as "progressive," the people involved - students, parents, and teachers - are categorized as conservative, and the reason for *reforms' failures* (Vanderstaeten, 2007). Further, even in an age of so-called accountability in classrooms, teachers who excel in the classroom must *leave* the classroom in order to advance professionally (Grumet, 1988; Taubman, 2009). Because professional advancement is typically rendered hierarchically, teachers' professional careers in classrooms are, in essence, limited to a point in their professional development when they "professionalize" themselves *out* of the classroom - unless they reject the hierarchical associations of professionalism *or* live in a place, like Mitchell County, where teaching is already among the higher-esteemed professions in the area.

Even in Mitchell County, national discourses and images of professional teachers and artists pervade what it means to *teach* locally. That teaching is a relatively denigrated "profession" is relatively widespread assumption, but there is an interesting aspect to Penland's placement within the art world that likely spurs its relationship to "the professional," too. Craft scholar Howard Risatti (2007), media scholars Jack Bratich and Heidi Bush (2011), and sociologist Richard Sennett (2008) all note that *craft* occupies a "lower" status than art in a hierarchical ladder of aesthetic work and sensibilities. Though

a recent interest in craft and craft performance has emerged (Adamson, 2010; Levine, 2009), *craftwork* still occupies a peripheral status in the art-world precisely because it *engages with the world too much.* Risatti's (2007) landmark book *A Theory of Craft* is among the first and boldest attempts to wrest contemporary craft theory from its subservience to art theory. Likewise, students who may someday work in modern, industrial craft are often hidden on the peripheries of schools that cater to so-called serious, college-bound students (Crawford, 2009; Kincheloe, 1999). Vocational education has largely fallen out of favor (and funding) in public schools (Kincheloe, 1999). Perhaps vocational education betrays the schools' dreams of professionalism. These histories, assumptions, and practices are mobilized in the everyday use of "professional" in and around both Penland and the Mitchell County Schools.

Penland's Professional Peripheries

Stacey Lane, the Community Collaborative Director, describes the legacy of Lucy Morgan as "open to ideas and full of life and so forth." I asked Stacey about the legacy of Lucy Morgan's Penland, because the Community Collaborative Initiative's work has always struck me as more parallel to her Penland than Bill Brown's Penland. Stacey responded: "It's fuzzy to me what her [Lucy Morgan's] interaction was with the community, as far as schools and things, during her time, but she did seem very open. Like, 'Everyone's welcome, come on up,' kind of thing."

The work of the Community Collaborative Initiative has been largely invisible at Penland. In September 2011, Penland published information about the Community Collaborative Initiative and its projects on the main website, but the work is still separate from the rest of campus. Primarily occurring at Ridgeway, isolated from Penland's main

campus, Meg's teaching art work occasionally gets attention in the form of complaints about school buses and the elementary students whose occasional presence seems uncharacteristic in Penland's very adult world. Addressing Ridgeway's separation from the heart of campus and its goings-on, Stacey says:

> But having this dedicated classroom has been amazing. And it is separate from the campus. And that's something we talk about as a staff. I think it's a benefit, because it's – it's a necessary separation, I think. It allows the students to stay focused in there, we have this nice classroom and it's near the gallery, which is part of their time here. And they do tour the campus when they come. But it also, because of – because they're kids – having a somewhat isolated, protected space where we can really keep track of them is good, I think. But in terms of the … it has this glorious back yard out here, too, which is amazing.

I interject with my own comments about students' lunchtime joy as Stacey continues:

> Yeah. So I love its location. I would not change a thing about it. I think if we were in the middle of campus, it would be more challenging. There would be a lot of distractions from both directions. So I do love where we are, but the isolated nature of the building makes it so that a lot of people don't even know that we happen. Also, the time of the year – because right now we're sort of ramping down our presence in the schools, and … and they're just ramping up over there. So that's another reason why people aren't necessarily aware. So we've really tried to expand our presence there by … we put posters in the dining halls …

Adrienne was the intern for the Community Collaboratives Initiative from August – December 2010. She had just graduated with a degree in art; she is a printmaker. I asked her if it was strange to be an intern at Ridgeway rather than being an intern in, say, the printmaking studio closer to the heart of Penland's campus. "Absolutely," she immediately responded.

> I was completely cut off from the school and the students. The only time I ever saw them was at lunch. And naturally, they'd become friends with whoever was in their classes or whoever was in their dorms, and I was alone in my house and then alone at Ridgeway. So it was hard sometimes, but not really. I found that I got closer to the people who *worked* for Penland because they weren't friends with the people who were going to school there, either. So it was completely different. Kind of alone. It's still good; I don't have any complaints about it at all, but it was strange.

Elementary school students parading around campus does not uphold an image of professionalism, nor does their presence around heavy machinery and molten glass and metal make for particularly relaxed and safe classroom environments – for them or for their adult counterparts at Penland.

Adrienne observed at one point that her presence on campus as the Community Collaborative Initiative intern, the first Ridgeway intern ever on campus, brought a more everyday-type of attention to the work happening at Ridgeway. She mentioned the posters advertising the Teaching Artist Initiative's work in The Pines, which Stacey drew attention to, but noted that *her* presence at lunch and with adult students and interns brought up many conversations about the work she was doing. All of the other professional studios and programs have interns and have for quite some time; her presence was part of a trend, I believe, in both stabilizing Ridgeway's programming and also elevating its status as a more professional element of Penland's larger programs. Adrienne was in a different organizational position than either Meg or Stacey, and her felt disconnect from the ongoing social and aesthetic life of Penland does not reflect the realities of either Meg or Stacey. Both Meg and Stacey worked at Penland as artists and in the adult art studios and residency programs prior to the development of Teaching Artist Initiative. Both long-time Penland residents, both Meg and Stacey are interwoven into the aesthetic and social fabric that makes up *professional* Penland. Though their current work with the Teaching Artist Initiative may be positioned on the peripheries of Penland's professional artist work, both Meg and Stacey are well-regarded members of the community of professional artists that make up Penland.

Many times, however, Meg described herself wryly as "an institutional problem." Meg's *work* is an institutional problem; Penland has no full-time or permanent faculty – when teachers come into Penland's professional studios to teach, they *teach* their intensives and receive a salary for the time period spent teaching. Meg, however, is paid an hourly wage – an indicator that her work needs to be delineated into a certain number of hours a day. Neither artists nor teachers are typically paid *hourly wages*; the work of artists and teachers are processes not often well-contained within regular 9-5 working hours. Throughout the county, teachers are praised for their work "above and beyond" the classroom and the requirements of the school; teachers' responsibilities are articulated *to the students* and their development rather than a set number of hours or other guidelines governing their working hours. Meg explains her teaching artist work *as her artwork*, a kind of artistic work and teaching differently measured against the work and teaching that occurs in the professional studios up on the main campus. Meg may be Penland's "professional teaching artist," but institutionally, her work-story is framed professionally as hourly, waged work delineated to a certain number of hours a week (30, to be exact). With its long association with salaried task-times rather than hourly-waged clock-time, Penland's institutional choice to pay her an hourly wage is one that undercuts the very significance of her as a "professional teaching artist." Even the teachers in the Mitchell County Schools are salaried, not hourly, employees. In a way, Meg is institutionally framed as neither a teacher nor an artist, though her work clearly involves both teaching and art-making.

Cheney and Ashcraft (2007) argue that academic research tends to further, rather than interrogate, the construction of professionalism. Organizational scholar Rebecca

Meisenbach (2008) agrees with Cheney and Ashcraft (2007), asserting that the prevalence of corporations and for-profit business in research on professionalism contributes to the reification of the professional as a sought-after idea. Fournier (1999), however, contends that professionalism is an imperfect tool of governance. In the indeterminacy of professionalism, she writes, exist "new possibilities for resistance or subversion as the meaning of professionalism gets contested" (Fournier, 1999, p. 302). In Mitchell County, artists' and teachers' negotiations of professionalism demonstrate resistance to professionalism's constraints even as the ideal of professionalism provides salient value and resources. Mitchell County is a particular socio-cultural environment where locally-held respect for teaching and art-making exist in tension with broader, culturally-held abstract images of that work, yet those tensions manifest locally, too. From the picture of Mitchell County I presented in Chapter Two, you surely recall that its particular economic and professional climate creates an environment in which, unlike the national scene, teachers and artists are generally touted not only as bearing the burden of saving education and the economy (as they are nationally), but as quite capable of doing so.

Mitchell County's dearth of typically-valued economic resources means that those who work as teachers and artists are framed as valuable citizens who have figured out how to carve out a living for themselves, all while making a contribution to the community. Nationally, however, neither artists (Ivey, 2008) nor teachers (Taubman, 2009) are well-respected. The "products" of their work are often deemed valuable, but their *ways of working* are frequently written off as "too peripheral" for significance (Ivey, 2008; Taubman, 2009). The contradiction between the general local respect for these

ways of working artistically and the general national denigration of artists and teachers actually creates rich possibilities for thinking about ways to move beyond professionalism's traps. The tensions that emerge as artistic ways of working are articulated to the organization of schooling provide ways to imagine, even within blanket of audit culture surrounding schooling, ways of supporting the communicative, social, material, and subjectivity-resources necessary for teaching. These processes and resources are the focus of Chapters Five and Six.

Crossing Penland's Professional Boundaries

Waiting in the dark for the diesel sounds of a school bus before it arrives at the top of Conley Ridge, Meg and Adrienne hope to intercept it before the driver turns on to Lucy Morgan Drive. In front of Ridgeway, Lucy Morgan Drive is more a parking lot than a road, though it does serve as a rough, gravelly driveway for a potter's studio and shop further down the ridge. Even long-experienced bus drives struggle to maneuver their buses in that narrow space. The Ridgeway Building, now the community education hub at the Penland School of Crafts, sits at the intersection of Lucy Morgan Drive and Conley Ridge Road about a half mile down the road from Penland's main campus. Just across Conley Ridge Road from Ridgeway sits large, white Horner Hall. Horner Hall's first floor now holds the Penland Gallery, while the upper floors are dormitories for adult students during their time at Penland. These two far-off buildings have a history deeply entwined with the Appalachian Industrial School; classes were once taught in Ridgeway, while Horner Hall served as the student and teacher dormitory for students who did not return home in the evenings. Horner Hall is rumored to have a ghost; a small girl child who died of a fever while attending the Appalachian School, it is said, still roams the hall

and welcomes guests. At some point after the Appalachian Industrial School closed in the 1960s, Ridgeway became Penland's dance hall. Several years ago it was renovated into its current state.

Meg tries to intercept school buses before they turn into the parking lot because the first stop for the fourth graders on this particular morning is The Pines, the heart of Penland's main campus. Fourth grade students in Mitchell County begin their Penland journeys with a tour of Penland's main campus, on which they learn about Penland's history and its various studios. The books that they will create with Meg will become homes for their "North Carolina Books," a goal of which is to celebrate the close-by richness of their experiences in North Carolina as much, if not more, than the far-off features of their state which, to many, remain as elusive as they might to persons from distant parts of the country. Though many have lived in Mitchell County their whole lives, this lesson on Penland will be their first in-depth encounter with its rich local history.

The Penland to which Meg introduces the students at The Pines is the Penland of Lucy Morgan – the Penland that began as a community weaving project at a school that was dedicated to teaching kids how to use their hands. The Penland that Meg connects to these students' work is not the Penland of the professional artist studios, state-of-the-art equipment, and a national reputation. Meg paints an image of kids, just like these kids, who came to Penland to go to school, spending school days *doing* and *making* and paying close attention to the world around them as they learned skills that would help them to survive. Meg tells students of skills like carpentry and cooking, farming and needlework, and toy-making and weaving while she asks them to *practice* skills of question-asking

and paying close attention in order to "research" some of the answers to their questions. Students squirm at the round tables of The Pines as they draw their questions and practice taking notes in whatever free-form they so desire.

On one hand, introducing students to a specter of Penland's past that is no longer an active part of the day-to-day life of Penland's campus is a strange choice; as a nationally-reputed professional craft school, Penland has a lot to offer to the area. I think that very phrase, however - "has a lot to offer" - is part of what Meg (and the Community Collaboratives Initiative) resist in the ways in which they negotiate between powerful associations with Penland and the rich aesthetic traditions and practices of the local community. Therefore, on the other hand, offering a version of Penland when the school was *less professional* and instead focused more explicitly on its deep communal connections functions both to implicitly critique the foreshortened possibilities of a professionalized Penland *and* to find ways to honor the qualities that students bring with them up the hill.

A history of separation.

That few students have learned much about Penland prior to their third and fourth grade bookmaking with Meg can be explained in a few ways. In the Fellowship Hall of the Episcopal Church on Sunday after the service, I learned from the many artists and folks "from off" attributed Penland's isolation from the community as close-mindedness of "Southern Baptist mountain people" to perceptions of artists and "devil worshippers" up on Penland's campus. I was intrigued by this idea, but it did not resonate with my experience in the county and students' and teachers' openness to artistic ways of working and being in the world. Students painted Easter crosses on hills for some of their morning

paintings, but the county is not puritan. I was consistently struck by the humility and openness I encountered in town, despite clearly being "from off."

As Penland's attention shifted from communally-based work to establishing professional-level art studios, its relationship with Mitchell County changed. Stacey describes the relational outcome of Penland's professionalization in this way:

> And so I think that, in some ways, lead to a rift – I don't think it was malicious in any way, what he was doing – but just because there wasn't an encouragement or a message constantly being sent out there that *this place is for y'all*, that rift left a lot of space for assumptions to build up in that vacuum.

"It's aloof." So fourth grade teacher Tamara describes Penland's relationship to Mitchell County. I counter, "It seems like it's been trying to connect with the community more over the last few years but was very separate for a long time." She continued:

> Uh huh. And it has a lot to overcome, with that aloofness that it has. I mean, the original intent was to help the local people. But then … it went through a big transformation when so many of the visiting artists were from so far away and they had a very limited local artistry population to connect with, then the fees and people couldn't afford it --- it's pretty far from the original weaving and the local cottage industry that it was. Which is great, too, but the local people lost of connection at the same time that they were losing a lot of their own local skills. So it's a good reason – and I hate to put it all on Penland, but the teachers have so much … to add one more thing, it's hard. But it would be great if Penland could have a parent night and have people up there and really kick off these journals. And really I think it should focus on third grade, because if they do it in third grade then the parents will already know it for fourth grade and tenth grade.

These women, describing the same phenomena from slightly different standpoints, characterize Penland as distant or removed from the community and also not particularly malicious.

To be professional is, in fact, to have a set of skills marketable to offer others. Paulo Freire (1970/2000) is careful to point out that, though professionals oftenperpetuate oppression, the construct of professionalism is in itself dominating.

> Professional women and men of any specialty, university graduates or not, are individuals who have been 'determined from above' by a culture of domination which has constituted them as dual beings. (Freire, p. 158)

By "dual beings," Freire means that they are both *effects* of a system of oppression (being oppressed themselves) and yet *affect* the perpetuation of the system (oppressing others) because of their fear of freedom, distrust of people, and attachment to their own particular, expert knowledge and its necessity. Though I would not characterize Penland's desire to bring the community *to* Penland as oppressive, I do see the ways in which Penland is both produced *and continues to produce* the bind of professionalism that maintains its separation from the community.

As a cultural phenomenon, professionalization coincided with the increasing specialization and segmentation of work in society (Braverman, 1974/1998; Cheney et al., 2010). We can see this at Penland; its professionalization as a nationally renowned craft school — no longer tied to the work of the Fireside Industries – meant a tightening of its offerings *and* its doors. Unfortunately for its relationship to the surrounding community, Penland's growing professionalism coincided with a job exodus and general deskilling of the local population. Both loss of industry *and* nearby modern conveniences contributed to local deskilling; with easier transportation and nearer-by local stores, some of the sheer necessity of hand-making decreased. Meg deeply mourns the loss of hand-skills among the local children. At the advent of her teaching work in Mitchell County, students crafted toys and dolls for younger siblings and *made* things on a regular basis; most students no longer are able to do such things. I think, in part, the coinciding stories of *upskilling* Penland and the *deskilling* of Mitchell County work to produce part of the

rift between Penland the county and, perhaps, county members' hesitance to come up unless personally and specifically invited.

The onus of collaboration.

Stacey and Adrienne talk about the importance of *collaboration* and being careful not to assume (from Penland's point of view) that Penland has something *to offer* to the community. Almost (but not quite) apologetically, third-grade teacher Tamara articulates her desire that Penland pick up more of the burden of the relationship with the public schools. The Community Collaborative Initiative Program at Penland used to be called "Community Outreach." When Stacey became the director, they changed the name to emphasize *collaboration*.

> We used to call this program Community Outreach. And then when I was moved into much more involvement down here, they were like, "What should your title be?" That word, "Outreach," has always sort of bothered me a little bit, because it feels much like "What are we going to do for you?" and that is just not the way that I envisioned working in the community. So the whole "Community Collaboration" thing, that word, I am definitely a believer in words really being powerful – to me, that's just a huge difference, the difference between community outreach and community collaboration. So everything that we're doing – we don't want to be this big institution that's deciding what you're going do and what you need, you know, we want to be an institution that is responsive to the changing needs of the community and … so anyway. So that's another reason why I think that teacher relationship is so important, that it truly be collaborative and not, "This is just another program that we're offering for you this year."

This standpoint is laudable, and resonates with conversations about dialogic engagement in research methodology and collaboration (Madison, 2005). Backing away from the problematic "professional" designation that one must have *something to offer* to another in order to be legitimate (Britzman, 2009; Freire, 1970/2000; Vanderstaeten, 2007), this move from "outreach" to "collaboration" appears to position Penland to the community horizontally rather than hierarchically. Yet at the same point, as organizational scholars

Eric Eisenberg (1995/2007) and Sarah Dempsey (2009) highlight, the demands of co-collaboration and co-creation, though well intended, can often *perpetuate* the very kind of power- and resource- differences that the work might strive to dissipate.

Often, the onus of collaboration requires community members' willingness to learn institutional language and to bend their availability to that of the institution (Eisenberg, 1995/2007). Penland offers "community day" to the whole community and "workshop nights" for parents and students in the grades that make books, but teachers, interns, and Penland-involved community members indicate that *only those community members* who already feel comfortable coming to Penland take advantage of these open invitations to campus. Tamara, though, describes Penland's stance toward the community as *aloof*; for a meaningful relationship with the schools and community, Penland must both open its doors and actively reach out to bring folks in. As it stands, Penland's "open door policy" appears more of an aloof invitation that still requires locals to do the literal and metaphorical work of crossing the threshold in order to enter its boundaries.

With the legitimization of knowledge and authority associated with professionalism comes not only the power to produce subjects (Foucault, 1984), but also the power to oppress (Freire, 1970/2000). Freire (1970/2000) maintains that professionals who have risen up through the ranks have done so by learning how to survive and thrive in an oppressive environment - from childhood through schooling and into the work world - often see themselves as having something to "offer" people to "save" them from their oppression, laziness, ignorance, or some other set of ills. Much like the "fear of ambiguity" that Eisenberg (1995/2007) critiques across the field of organizational communciation, professionals' "fear of freedom" (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 156) is greater

for those who have never felt the contradictions or impossibilities of the systems they perpetuate. By Freire's account, that these professionals become defensive and divisive when someone suggests that the nature of their work is neither humanizing nor a gift but, in itself, oppressive.

Penland's establishment as a serious studio program helped to ensure Penland's future existence (Dreyer, 2004). The very processes of specialization and segmentation that solidified Penland's professionalization and increased status occurred as those in Mitchell County were experiencing increasing mechanization in their occupations; the hand-crafted furniture companies, small-run grist mills, and other local industries requiring great skill and hand-work were leaving. Even if furniture craftsmanship never coincided with white-collar professional assumptions of professionalism – Penland's variety of professionalism does not, either – masterful craftwork certainly exists on a different aesthetic, economic, and social register than mechanized mining or repetitive service tasks at many of the jobs that remained in the county. Teaching work, partitioned by curricula and standardized exams and framed to be semi-skilled work (Darling-Hammonds, 1997; Tyack, 1974), is *associated* with less skill and lower professional status than other types of work that require the same (or less) education and day-to-day conceptual work and problem-solving. Teachers everywhere in the United States, but particularly in low-income areas such as Mitchell County, lack the supplies and resources that would make their work at least more financially stable and possible.

Collaboration, though sometimes posed as an ideal form of equity and communication, assumes pragmatic significance in the Teaching Artist Initiative and arts integration. Both the Teaching Artist Initiative and arts integration, more broadly,

necessitate the full participation of classroom teachers if the arts process is to contribute to student learning and not just another "enrichment" experience uncorrelated to curricula or cognitive and social development of students. As Tamara says, however, teachers have *so much to do*. Visiting with a number of artists "from off," in Spruce Pine one weekend afternoon, I heard their stories of locals – neighbors – who had lived in Mitchell County for their whole lives and had never been to Penland. A few of those artists, after building relationships with their neighbors, personally invited them to Penland to do something specific – to look at the new blacksmithing studio, to try out paste painting, to inspect the newly-threaded looms in Lucy Morgan Hall – and their neighbors *came*.

Aesthetic Work in Institutionalized Places

Despite the work story that suggests Meg's time and work are bounded by a certain set of hours per week (and institutional requirements such as weeks of program evaluation each May and June, supply ordering, institutional meetings, etc.), Meg asserts that Penland has afforded her immense creative freedom and "a lot of great yoga." As an institution, Penland seemed to simply "allow" this work to continue happening, providing resources for Meg to continue the work that she loves without having to piecemeal a variety of odd-jobs together in order to continue doing the work she says she has always known that she would do – a piece of Meg's artistic work that I will develop in the next chapter. The impetus for Penland asserting some "authorship" of the Teaching Artist Initiative work is, in fact, a question of "signature" or making its work known. While Penland hires teachers who teach workshops and core intensives, Penland exists more as the studio, or the workshop space, in which that work can occur. The work that occurs during Penland's cornerstone educational program speaks for itself; the school has

perfected its serious studio program over the last forty years. Meg's work does *not* happen in a professional studio – Meg is Penland's professional *teaching artist*, a professional in a process rather than a space of potential, much harder to categorize or explain. Penland's recent push (in late 2011) to shed some light on Meg's work – problematic and difficult to categorize as it may be – came after Jean McLaughlin (the current director) was at a meeting in Spruce Pine when a community member misattributed Meg's work to the Toe River Arts Council, a separate organization from Penland (though many local artists have connections to both the Toe River Arts Council and Penland). Stacey explains:

> I know Jean [McLaughlin] would like for us to [advertise] that because nothing drives her more crazy than to be in a meeting in Spruce Pine and to understand that people don't know that it's us doing this work or to say that TRAC's doing it. And she's not … (makes a scowl of sorts), you know, but it is complex, and people tend to lump all the arts activities in the schools into one. She would like for us to recognize that we're doing this much. Not to the exclusion to anybody else. But just to – because we do need local support, and when we're looking for local support and people are like, "Penland's more of a *national* organization, aren't they?" She's … we need to do a better job down here of doing that.

Interestingly, this work is *not* Penland's, nor is it uniquely Meg's. As I described in Chapters Two and Three, Meg's work in the schools long pre-dated Penland's involvement, and her work falls into a tradition of teaching through and with the arts that is a part of the educational legacy of the county. Penland's institutional largess, however, provides the stability that enables Meg work iteratively on the current bookmaking project year after year, instead of constantly improvising around whatever needs arise with teachers who want her in their classrooms.

My own foray into doing some teaching artist work shed light onto this for me; I taught 60 second and third grade students in a carpeted, table- and sink-less, Duke lecture

hall for a program toward which the university was expressing a great deal of animosity. Like Penland, Duke is not set up to accommodate the exuberance or curiosity of second- and third-grade students who, like Mitchell County School elementary school students, need to run wildly outside during their lunch breaks in order to focus when they return to the classroom.

Advertising the work of the Teaching Artist Initiative makes savvy financial sense for possible contributors and grant-makers who may be more interested in innovative uses of the arts for community engagement and educational equity than Penland's adult-centered craft educational work. The institutional claim of this work came after the Teaching Artist Initiative's work was misattributed to another organization in town. Penland's belated ownership of this work expresses both its pride and its *ownership* of work suddenly valued not in its own right, but because TRAC was mistakenly praised.

Anne Witz and her colleagues (Witz, Warhurst & Nickson, 2002) theorize corporations' relationships to aesthetic labor, arguing that persons' crafting of aesthetic selves is often colonized by corporations as a part of the institution's larger aesthetic image. Theirs is not the only perspective on the ways that corporate work and its association with professionalism have swallowed creativity and aesthetic work. For instance, Stefan Nowotny (2011) suggests that project-based methods of organizing workplaces and work-tasks exemplify ways in which the concept of "artist" and "artwork" have been subsumed by neoliberalism. This project-based form of institution, Nowotny argues, "has no stable institutional structure at its disposal at all" (p. 19). This "lack" of structure, he posits, allows the institution a certain amount of freedom, but

perpetuates a state of individual and social precarity because it cannot offer much stability once its purpose is fulfilled. Nowotny (2011) writes that policy and social practice and assumption continue to "attribute certain activities (particularly symbolically valued ones such as 'creativity') to a certain preferred type of presupposed (gendered, racialized, or otherwise qualified) subjects" (p. 20).

In another instance, in the introduction to their edited volume *Critique of Creativity,* social theorists Gerald Raunig, Gene Ray, and Ulf Wuggenig (2011) write:

> In the tradition of the aesthetics of genius and charismatic imagination, a social selection is performed: the truly creative social actors, the designated elect who generate and release innovations, are marked apart - and marked up for symbolic ascension. (p. 1)

In the current social climate, the "aesthetic" and "creative" are the keys to the new meritocracy. The "creative" are cast as the "new elect" (Florida, 2002, 2010; Raunig, Ray & Wuggenig, 2010). Professionals who *work artistically* in corporate and new economic environments also achieve this freedom from physical location – so long as their work is firmly anchored in the social and cultural milieu of the "creative class," geography matters far less (Florida, 2002, 2010). Florida's (2002) earlier work helped to propagate the discourse of the merits of creativity, particularly urban creativity and entrepreneurship, and his newest work (2010) extends his case to a "recovery plan" for the current recession (Raunig, Ray, & Wuggenig). At its worst, this way of engendering creativity and artistry is a carefully crafted individualism wherein the "creative self" is a commodity to marketed, sold, and applied to increase personal value.

Penland is not a corporation, but it is certainly an institution. Meg's relationship to Penland positions her work in such a way that even though her work necessarily operates at the peripheries of its campus, outside of its professional studios, Penland can

claim ownership or authorship of her artistic practice – perhaps even framing her professional practice as another example of the ways in which Penland activates its mission to helps people learn how to live "creative lives." The actual practice of Meg's work stands in almost direct contradiction to the ways in which commodified creative selves can be bought and sold. Professional discourse around creativity, as we see, does not have the language or structure to give meaning to the kinds of work that she does outside of commodification.

Professionalism and Mobility

Part of the power of professionalization is the absence of *tie to location* – "professionals are free to move about society" (Cheney et al., 2010, p. 141; Gini, 2000). This idea of mobility is perhaps a false one, in reality; even in his work on the mobility of the professionals that make up "the creative class," Florida (2002, 2010) connects highly-mobilized creative-class individuals to particular urban geographies of space and class. At Penland, the professional status of its studios and space are utilized as attractors to campus, while Meg's *practice* rather than her studio *place* is what is deemed "professional." The concept of mobility and localization come up in this conversation surrounding Penland, the resources it provides for Mitchell County Schools, and the history of craft.

Professionalism is tied up in class mobility. Among factors that *limit* class mobility, sociologist Antony Giddens (1984) lists: limitations in one's career or generation that foster the reproduction of life over a period of time, and the confinement of one's position in the labor market to occupations that generate a similar level of material outcome. Giddens (1984) calls these limitations *mobility closure*. In other words,

mobility closure refers to the features of people's stations in life that reproduce their life conditions rather than helping them to move on to the next station. Giddens (1984) uses this concept to explain the ways in which social classes are structured; the structure of social classes directly correlates to the relative degree of mobility people have, and their mobility is directly correlated to the *market capacity* of the work that they do. The structure of social classes, therefore, stems from the relative *limits* of one's own ability to move into an occupation that can generate more material resources than her parents could make through work. The extent to which relatively stable class structures exist reflects the extent to which certain people and their work are constrained from generating material and social significance. Thus, we have concepts and realities like "generational poverty" and "old money."

In Mitchell County, people's perceived and real access to move up and down Conley Ridge Road between Penland and the rest of Mitchell County correlates to their sense of social location. With Penland's application of the word "professional" to its studios and artistic work, its relationship with the educational work in the Mitchell County Schools grows more complicated. Mitchell County school students' presence on Penland's campus is necessarily relegated to the peripheries of Penland in order to maintain its professional, adult image – an image that I argue is associated with class and mobility. I believe that locals' sense that those associated with Penland are "from off," *even if those people are long-time or forever-Mitchell County residents*, connects to the real and perceived distance between Penland and Mitchell County.

The parallel between the *upskilling* of the professional studios on Penland's campus and the *deskilling* of Mitchell County residents connects, I believe, to the sense

that the degree of craft skill one possess connects to her ability to craft a new reality for herself. In the schools, Meg's artistic work with the books is necessarily relegated to the peripheries of the schools' professional standards and curricular practices so tightly held in the broader accountability culture of public education. To the extent that Meg's expert knowledge and artistic skill poses a reminder of the deskilling of the local population (and the organization of schooling, itself), her work must remain at the periphery in order to not upend the current organization of movement and skill. If teachers in public schools and artists in corporate settings are deemed free of the relative social mobility of professionals, is there another process to signify their developments or achievements?

Historian Robert Kirstofferson (2007) writes of a phenomenon called "craft mobility," which provides a helpful resource to understand different forms used to signify skill development and work achievement outside of the typical mobility patterns of professionalism and capitalism. Kristofferson (2007) utilizes the phrase craft mobility to describe a craftsman's progression from apprentice, to journeyman, to master in the traditional model of craftsmanship and artisanship. A craft tradition reaching back to at least the Middle Ages, craft mobility came to signify, in the early industrialization of Canada, a desired version of self-sufficiency, self-governance, and mastery characteristic of an ideal masculinity. Craft mobility was *not* synonymous with social mobility, but the ways in which craft mobility were understood helped to structure the understandings, desires, and structures for the craftsman's mobility in growing industrialization. Namely, the framework of craft mobility generated possibilities for *mastery* and continued ownership (or future ownership) of the means of production for craftsmen, who still worked within a growing capitalistic framework.

Betwixt and between the capitalist and craft worlds, craftsmen occupied a liminal space of class relations and experiences characterized by what Kristofferson (2007) terms a "transmodal" experience. Kristofferson's (2007) analysis is based on the historical analysis of early industrialization in Hamilton, Ontario (1840 – 1872), but the characteristics of the "transmodal" class experience are interesting in light of the negotiations of professionalism and work. The cornerstone of the transmodal class experience is rooted in the tradition of craft mobility, a structural arrangement that "opened up to them a more or less hopeful experience of industrial capitalism" (p. 242).

On one's journey to becoming an entrepreneurial master craftsman, one earned wages *from* a master craftsman during one's apprenticeship and journeyman phases of professional development and growth. Unlike burgeoning industrial capitalism, masters worked in shops alongside those to whom they paid wages (apprentices and journeymen), showing a kind of mutuality in labor and learning. From these master craftsmen, apprentices and journeymen, wage-earners, could learn the skills and expertise they would need to eventually become master craftsmen in their own rights. Though wage-earners worked for or under masters, this was a step in the traditional model of mobility through craft work. By working for or under a master craftsman, a craftsman-to-be came *closer and closer* to owning the means of production, rather than becoming further alienated from those means of production. Master craftsmen were living symbols of craft mobility and the possible entrepreneurial life that could develop from a time of learning and working for a master.

In the significant practices that came to symbolize one's own ownership and relative mastery over his skill, craft mobility's development of skill and use provides a

helpful counterpoint to the typical narratives of mobility encountered in professionalism. The typical mobility narratives of professionalism undercut the aesthetic and artistic depth that is often characterized by becoming a "master" teacher or artist – professionalism's lure seems to make a teacher or artist's desire to deepen her craft counter-intuitive. The discourse and practice of "mentor teachers" in public schooling resonates with some of the ideas of craft mobility, notably its emphasis on deepening practice and craft. The phenomenon of "mentoring" has been a part of the organization of schooling since the mid-1980s, meant to designate experienced "successful" teachers as mentors to younger, newer, or struggling teachers (Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002; Little, 1990). Despite the promise of mentor-protégée relationships in the organization of schooling, these relationships did not (and do not) really impinge on the language of the profession. Education scholar Judith Little (1990), in a prescient look at the use of mentor-protégée relationships in teaching, argues that in most instances, mentorships in schooling are downgraded to teacher induction and help-giving rather than fostering any sense of expertise or deep practice. In fact, because of the imposition of mentor-protégée relationships in schooling from school administration, Little (1990) argues that teacher mentoring is profoundly conservative. Twelve years later, education researchers Carmen Giebelhaus and Connie Bowman (2002) found that most mentorship programs in schools were established *without* any kind of additional support from the school, and were therefore a burden for both mentors and mentees. Interestingly, Giebelhaus and Bowman (2002) found that in addition to some sort of mentor-training, mentor teachers' sense of their own subject-area expertise had a significant correlation with the success of their mentor-protégée relationships.

Craft mobility offers us a way to think about a mobility that occurs within a static geographic and economic location, characterized by a deepening of one's own ability to use *and to teach* craft skill in order to bring forth new possibilities of material. Though the organization of schooling essentially prohibits mobility as seen in a professional setting, hierarchies of skill, influence, and mastery of one's own ability to teach certainly resonate with both the words of teaching-craft and the craft of making and teaching object-making. Interestingly, however, Kristofferson (2007) writes that though the master craftsman-maker relationship was marked by immediacy and mutualism, it fueled the social constructions and practices of the "self-made" craftsman.

Self-made craftsworkers' success, though not following the same kinds of mobility featured in industrial capitalism, often looked similar. Craftwork is often thought to conflate the production of ideas with the production of goods, while capitalism is often thought to *separate* the production of ideas from the production of goods (Braverman, 1974/1998; Kristofferson, 2007; Risatti, 2007; Sennett, 2008). Ultimately, however, those who found success did so because they were "self made craftsmen," embodying an elevated and idealized version of independence and masculinity necessary to successfully navigate the upwardly-mobile industrialized world even while making craft. So, despite the promising possibilities for craft mobility to foster depth and significance in the practice of craftwork, or, in our case, teaching work, Kristofferson's (2007) craft mobility ultimately becomes a resource for craftworkers to move upward in society. As Little (1990) characterizes the phenomenon of teacher mentoring, this kind of mobility is premised on assumptions of *satisfaction*, but ultimately becomes about

achievement. When there is nowhere to go, or nothing recognizably achieved, mobility stagnates.

Professional Penland as a resource.

Despite the "professionalization" of Penland and its separation from Mitchell County, it *is its very professionalization* that marks it as a resource or something "bigger" than what Mitchell County and its schools have to offer to students. The Penland School of Crafts is long removed from its community-school roots; roots which, I believe, Penland necessarily needed to leave behind if it were going to continue as an established art-based craft school. Through Penland's process of "professionalization," its innate bonds with the community of Penland and the surrounding communities in Mitchell County diminished. In the process of developing "professional" studios, separate from the quilting circles and craft-lessons shown in the first Penland bulletins and the tales of early Penland, Penland's workshops and studios became more private. Ever-workshop spaces of shoulder-to-shoulder work (for those who took classes at Penland), its studio doors were (literally) closed to the community. No longer were community spectators welcome to stop in and observe classes, or to pop by on tours of campus to see what kind of work was happening at Conley Ridge. To this day, signs posted by the studio doors ask visitors "not to interrupt" the work happening in the studios. Penland's workshop studio are preserved, protected classroom spaces where artistic community develops *in*, but not across the threshold of those not enrolled in any particular course. In the liminal space of the professional studios, the work that happens, by all accounts I have heard, can be magical.

Penland's professionalization process, if I were to characterize it in a particular way, tightened the structures that protected its professional studio spaces *as liminal spaces*. As a result, Penland's mystique as a place where people can learn to live creative lives through intensive study and practice of craft-work has continued to develop on its ridge, drawing people from all over the state and the country to work in its studios. As Penland tightened its professional studio spaces, however, strengthening the possibilities for liminality and communitas to occur within its studios, the depth of relationship with the local community naturally dwindled. Even interns, largely students "from off" only committed to be at Penland for a period of six months, are present for long enough to differentiate themselves from paying, full-time Penland students.

From conversations and observations over the course of my time at Penland, it seemed as though a rift existed between the transient adult students and those who worked to make Penland's work happen. Students, perhaps, came to see what Penland has to offer them; employees and interns, perhaps, looking for what Penland has to offer them *while* working to ensure that Penland offers things to others. Adrienne, the big-eyed print-maker and photographer, came to North Carolina for her six-month internship after a lifetime in Utah. The mystique of the mountains, I imagined, would not wear off when one is cloistered on a beautiful ridge for two frenetically sleepless weeks as she learns ironworking, hones her craft in bookmaking, or participates in a workshop in any of Penland's studios. Adrienne's six-month internship was long enough for the mystique to disappear. The eternal dampness of the fall moulded her woolen coat. A mouse ate her meticulously crafted prints from college, and stared at her most evenings. The interesting accents and turns-of-phrases necessitated explanation. The dark and tree-filled nights

oozed inky blackness everywhere. The pipes froze in the unheated kitchen of the third rental house she lived in. Her closet became home to some sort of mysterious vermin. She spent her evenings working furiously in Ridgeway and in the printmaking studio, using the time and solitude to continue working on her own work when she was not connected with the county. Among the Penland students and those for whom Penland is an artistic and intellectual home, even if a foreign and, sometimes oppressive-seeming one, a distinction exists between those who come to utilize the professional studio spaces Penland has crafted and those who participate in the ongoing crafting of the experience.

As Penland's professional teaching artist, Meg's potential is not necessarily linked to a particular professional *space*. Because Meg is a professional *teaching artist*, the nature of her artwork is subservient to the ways in which she *works as a teaching artist.* When Meg works in her capacity as a teaching artist, I doubt that Penland would describe Meg as a "professional artist" in the ways in which visiting artists who teach in the professional studios are described as "professional artists," despite the fact that *Meg herself* has been one of Penland's *professional artists* at other points in time. Meg's teaching artist professionalism is harder to quantify, and she is more aligned with the teachers in the Mitchell County Schools and their status as non-professional workers than she is with the fellow artists teaching at Penland when she does her teaching artist work. For, like Ridgeway, Mitchell County School classrooms are *also* not professional spaces; they are spaces where teachers work, but they are not the sacred, unsupervised, free spaces of the professional artist studios at Penland. As a professional teaching artist, Meg has the potential to transform others' classrooms, like those of the teachers in the Mitchell County Schools, into studios. Though Meg's work as a professional teaching

artist may help to re-define how classroom space is encountered, communicated in, and utilized, those studios which she works to create through *her* work will also never be "professional," because they are always in the service of supporting someone else's teaching and learning. As Penland's professional teaching artist, Meg's potential is to work artistically with others, but not to establish firm boundaries about work that happens *at* Penland or what Penland's work *is.*

Rootedness and mobility.

"… that swing, or that tree, or …" Brandon, a fourth grade teacher at Gouge Elementary, listed as he named the elements of his students' visits to Ridgeway that ended up in their books, somehow. For Brandon, his students' visits to Ridgeway at Penland *while* making their books offered an opportunity for three "out of the ordinary" experiences for students: *enjoyment* while learning, learning *about* something they could also tangibly touch and experience, and *responding* to those experiences immediately and tactilely as a part of making their own unique versions of an assignment. When asked if, then, his students' experiences at Penland were different from a typical school day, Brandon responded, hesitantly at first: "Well, yeah. Yeah. A lot." Seeming to gain confidence as he spoke, he continued:

> Obviously it's more rigid in regular school days, you know; we are pretty structured with our time schedules, which have to be justified and in their place. So to me, [the trip to Penland], that's big. They enjoyed it a lot – tremendously – just to get to take the trip out there, to do those things, just to be outside.

Although Brandon highlighted the perceived "bigness" of his students' trip to Penland, it seemed as though there was something *else* toward which he attributed the large significance of his students' visit. Throughout our conversation, he alluded to many of the transformational features typically associated with art (opening students to

experiences bigger than themselves, tapping into other ways of learning, building relationships between self and others), which are certainly profoundly important aspects of doing integrated art-work with students in schools. There seemed to be something *else* there, though – the elements he listed were not the pieces of this project that seemed to excite him the most. As I learned during my time in Mitchell County, the care and respect that people show one another in conversation often elides saying precisely what the speaker believes. As Brandon spoke more about his experience of teaching in Mitchell County, I began to understand why he found the trip to Penland so significant.

"Being local." Trying to help me to understand his meaning of "being local," Brandon explained:

> You can say that you attended – you got your doctorate at UNC-Chapel Hill. That will have significance if you end up working in London. You figure, that will have a tie to that point in your life. And to then, I think – and of course I can't speak for them – I feel like that will be a memory that they can pull from later, because it was 6 miles away versus 6000.

As we continued to talk about the significance of "being local," Penland *as a local marker of a larger world* emerged as the hinge-point of this experience, from Brandon's perspective. The Penland School of Crafts, just a few miles away from the school's home in Bakersville, has a cultural significance far bigger than this little town. The majority of Brandon's students had never visited Penland before their 3rd grade book project, nor had many of their parents. For Brandon, Penland had the significance to be able to build a connection between his Bakersville students and those from completely different walks of life, perhaps persons who had never heard of (or negatively perceived) the tiny little mountain town in western North Carolina. For many of his students, being on Penland's campus and "seeing license plates from, oh, twenty different states or so, all in one place"

is a *first experience*, and a marker, he believes, for them that they are indeed part of a larger world where they might be able to find some sort of success and happiness.

For Brandon, Penland's professionalism and larger-than-local context is *what* makes it a valuable local resource. Its mere existence as a cultural and economic symbol and one *that his students, upon invitation, can permeate*, bears significance for him as he tries to educate students for the "here and now" of what he refers to as the stressful high-stakes testing and the "there and then" of their future selves. Penland's location *in* the county but not *of* the county, coupled with students' invitation to work on campus with Penland's own "professional teaching artist" marks a highly valuable experience for Brandon in his work to teach the students of Mitchell County. Brandon loves sports – middle school sports at the school from which he had just been moved after sixteen years – for the same reason. Penland, for Brandon's students, offers an identification with something larger than the school, the county, or he could offer them.

Because of Penland, Meg's mobility lives more in perception than reality. Simultaneously enabling and constraining – the institution of Penland is what makes possible the stability for Meg to work in the schools in the ways that she does. Interestingly, the institutionalization of Meg's work at Penland lends her the stability to be able to adapt to the whims of the school's bureaucracy and stringent resources. Although the school has a much better sense of Meg's work than Penland does, it maintains a tight grip on the allocative and authoritative resources with which to do this work (Giddens, 1984). Because of Penland's stability and provision of allocative and authoritative resources to do this work, Meg can enter into the bureaucracy of the school's project with resources otherwise denied its students and teachers. The irony, of

course, is that it is only through the art and pedagogy of Meg's teaching work that the resources of Penland can enter into the experience of schooling (for children) and teaching (for teachers) – without her translation of improvisatory practice, both the professional undergirding of both institutions lack the flexibility and ambiguity to engage one another.

"Since our economy has bottomed out, we've had a lot of families who have moved away, to go to somewhere where there is a little work or whatever," Gary, the principal of Deyton Elementary School in Spruce Pine, explained. Showing a deep understanding of the importance of care (and teachers who can both care and teach), Gary spoke about hardships his students face that are associated with poverty. "You can't really do well in math if you're worried about who is going to be at your house when you go home in the afternoon, or who isn't going to be there." Thusly, preparing his students to compete with other students from other places where there isn't so much poverty is one of Gary's large goals for education at his school. "Mattering beyond the borders" is how he frames this kind of initiative:

> We are in the process of completing a strategic plan for Mitchell County. Mitchell County schools and different parts of the community coming together … number one it's a mindset for parents. We've got to get parents having the mindset that education matters. Not just in Mitchell County, but outside the border. We're talking world, now. Not just the county, not just the state. But you know the things that go on in the classroom today affect students worldwide, things their students are doing – not just in Spruce Pine or Mitchell County. It's global now.

Mirroring the impulse of many "global" initiatives happening across the country, Mitchell County is working to achieve this through technology. While closing the technology gap that mirrors the achievement gap along socioeconomic lines is of vital importance, handing kids computers *is not enough* to expand thinking beyond current

borders. For Gary, going to Penland opens a "whole new world" for his students, one which (he thinks) they did not know existed prior to going to Penland. While he counts the artists coming from Penland (and other arts organizations in town) among indispensable resources for his students and teachers, *going to Penland* tops the list of resources. Calling Penland a "well-kept secret" in Mitchell County until the last "three or so" years, in which he has seen Meg and others reach out to build relationships with the rest of Mitchell County, Gary says that while students go to Penland to work with Meg, they also experience a world of art and artists that "they might not have any idea about."

> I feel like that's where Penland has been so advantageous for us, just having [artists] there. And the offsprings from there, all the people making pottery, doing painting, and the studios that you have around, that's just part of our mix now.

The value of Penland, to Gary, comes from its ability to attract and foster an environment where artists *can work and live* – a beacon that draws others "from off" to Mitchell County, providing different ways of thinking about and creating the world and the community. Again, it is Penland's very "professional" nature – *in* the county but not *of* it, that helps to draw forth artists and makers whose craft and studios provide ways of thinking and being in the world perceived (by these educators *from* Mitchell County) otherwise unavailable to their students.

Professional Institutions for Artistic Work

There were two art teachers in Mitchell County Schools when Morgen Houchard, Director of Curriculum and Technology for the county, arrived five years ago. He recounts that he pushed for the arts, saying that he had realized what the arts does for students and their intellectual development and "how it stimulates – it pays dividends on the academic side." Not an artist, Morgen learned this from making his own books with

Meg. An ally of this work in the county, Morgen explains that *he* learned through experience the value of making books and working in them, and that he doesn't believe that teachers can understand their value until they have also worked through the process of making and *working in* their books. In the fall of 2011, Morgen helped to institutionalize teacher work days *for Meg's project* specifically, something that Meg and Penland had been unable to require until this point. Though so important for the value of the experience for pedagogy and learning, Penland and Meg did not have (or would not create – there are differing opinions on this) the legitimate authority in order to require teachers, or the schools, to participate in any particular aspect of this work. Morgen's notion that artistic work "pays dividends" on the academic side, though rooted in his own experiences, utilizes an economic metaphor to describe the value of making – and working in – books. Calling the books (and other crafts) "useable arts," I see the ways in which Morgen describes loving "the idea that I could make something that was both useable and artistic" woven into the ways in which he explains the value of Penland to the Mitchell County Schools.

In this vein, Morgan describes one of the most valuable assets of Meg and Penland as sharing their resources so that Meg can have the time and materials to do the bookmaking project with as many kids as she does, with the stability to do so year after year with the same age-groups of students. Unlike any other arts program in the county, Meg's work through Penland (and Penland's stability in terms of monetary support for the project itself) and institutionalization of the Teaching Artist Initiative provide important points in the learning-story that Mitchell County Schools attempts to shape for its students across grade-levels. Because teachers in certain grades work with Meg year

after year, he believes that teachers develop some of the skills Meg has and could apply them in other areas. As we will see in Chapter Five, some teachers' perceptions of this transfer differ from Morgen's. In this small district where teachers are frequently shifted from school to school in order to fulfill budgetary and population needs, Meg's work with the third and fourth grades in particular has the potential to touch a number of teachers working in the district.

The depth of craft traditions exists in tension with the organization of teaching, which tends to favor autonomy and individualism and, namely, living up to standards written by people outside of the craft (Taubman, 2009; Vanderstaeten, 2007). The kind of "standardization" of which Morgen speaks – what I would more readily call "a community of practice" – seems to speak to the desire for a self-governing stability apparent in most craft-work that teachers and public educators do not enjoy. This kind of self-governing practice resonates with the apprenticeship and mastery models common to Kristofferson's (2007) craft mobility. In Morgen's words, despite teachers' relative professional status in Mitchell County (by sheer dearth of other "more" professional options found elsewhere through business, medicine, law, etc.), the abstract image of teaching and the organization of education circumvent more solid attributions of professionalism (Vanderstaeten, 2007). Morgen explains this in his own words:

> So if you look at the physicians or the lawyers – the lawyers have the bar. The dental association has their own organization to regulate themselves. CPAs have their own. And we're regulated by legislators who change possibly every four years, who – a lot of times – unrealistic goals. So we're kind of handed down information – it doesn't come from us. That's an issue, nationally, that I think weighs on teachers. We're somewhat at the whim of whatever legislator or governor is at charge at *that* particular time.

"Being at the whim" of the national legislatures positions teachers in relationship to the state much as courtier artists existed in relationship to the courts and their commissioners as craftwork moved away from guild work to studios of individual talent (Sennett, 2008).

Meg's craftwork intersects with academic work at the schools with its emphasis on *depth* and extension of history. When students begin English II during their tenth grade year at Mitchell High, they receive their Family Culture and History Album assignment from their teachers.

> *In English II, you will learn about World Literature and spend a great deal of time discovering things about yourself and how you fit into the world around you. The Family Culture Project will be a "keepsake," a collection of many types of works that you will compose about yourself and your family. In addition to the required written works, your project should represent you, the creator. You will have the opportunity to work with a bookmaker from Penland School of Crafts and will make personal books to use for this project.*

"But it started out, mainly, as a way to help them see that this area is rich in culture that some places don't have, and they should be proud of it," explains tenth grade teacher Melora. She continues, "and proud of the fact that their family farms for living and aren't computer technological engineers or whatever."

As Meg guides students and teachers through the craftwork necessary to produce their books, she frames their present work in a genealogy of rich histories. Students' school-work is primarily future-oriented; the function of school-work, even if learning history, is its projected use-value in situations in the nearby and far-off imagined future. Lessons learned and work performed are validated by their use-value in the future, whether the situations calling forth students' use of those lessons and work are standardized tests, high school and college entrance, job-getting and security, or ability to make and manage money. Meg's guidance through craftwork also has future-oriented

elements. Many of these future-oriented components are aimed at skills necessary to construct well-crafted books; learning how to wield the fettering knife well on a Tuesday, for example, will help students to more-easily slice two-inch strips of paper two days later, which will become sleeves for the pages of their books.

Meg explains the functionality of steps and skills at each point in the process, to help students understand how the hand and conceptual skills they practice while craftworking will help them create books that *they will treasure*. Meg reminds high school students to be mindful of the placement of photographs on opposing pages in the books, and to place sheets of waxed paper between pages that hold photographs. Meg explains that this mindful treatment of photographs will protect photos from sticking to opposite photographs and pages when their emulsion inevitably becomes gummy in the humidity of non air conditioned Appalachian summers. Sticky and ruined photographs and pages are what this current practice of mindfulness aims to prevent, but the affective value of students' books are why they heed Meg's advice. As Melora notes, "These books – they're their *whole souls*." Throughout the process of book-construction, Meg emphasizes the importance of good craftsmanship *in order to create a keepsake*. After students construct the books, Meg asks them who the audience for the books is. Students include their current teachers and Meg in the audience they name, but the audience also involves imagined future and hoped-for interactions: themselves in the future, future spouses and partners, future children, future grandchildren, nieces and nephews when they grow older, and current friends *in the future*. Rather than attending to technical details for the sake of attending to technical details in order to build sufficient books,

Meg encourages students to attend to technical details for the sake of *protecting the treasure that they are creating*.

Morgen is a dad – he has three high-school age sons – and is thinking a great deal about their options to stay in the county. Unless his children want to pursue a career in health or education, there are no opportunities for them. Unless, that is, they create their *own* opportunities as entrepreneurs. The county's artists – brought by Penland (*in* the county, not *of* the county) – make a good living, Morgen recounts:

> I'm on the EDC board, the Economic Development Board, and one of the pieces that we're trying to push is entrepreneurship. Because we know that our goal for Mitchell County is to graduate children who are college or career ready. We know everyone's not going to go to college, and that's actually fine. But what are you going to do if you don't go to college? So we're trying to get folks who are career ready. There are several different ways that you can do that. The real push is entrepreneurship. And one of the – I sit on the TRAC Board, the Toe River Arts Council, and talk to artists all the time. And one of the things that I hear from them, that they continually say, is "I make a pretty good living." And some of our artists make a really good living. But it's not dependent on the local economy. So, I make coffee mugs and plates, or I weave baskets, and then I sell them to folks who don't live here. So then I bring that money back and I spend it in this county – in this community - and that is good. And there's a lot of merit to that. We don't … so, we're trying to push this entrepreneurship. So if you've got a talent – a lot of people have a talent and are afraid to go out on their own – but I … I haven't looked at the stats on the artists around here, but there are hundreds. I know we have 160 in TRAC and that's just two counties. So there have got to be a lot of people making a lot of money in business for themselves. So we're trying to push that a little bit more. If you're college-ready, and those are the kids who are on the college track, that's great. But if you're not, then … And we're also trying to get things for careers, too, like brick layers and stone masons. We *need* those folks. In fact, if I had the talent to lay stones, I'd be doing it right now and making a lot more money. So, that's another side of this that we're trying to incorporate into it for these kids who are graduating.

The artists in Mitchell County work in an artistic environment fostered, in part, by Penland's pull to this particular locale, but support themselves entrepreneurially in ways that pull business from places outside the county. In this way, the entrepreneurial model originated by Lucy Morgan's Penland Weavers remains: she sold local women's wares

outside the county (including a fabled trip to the 1934 World's Fair in Chicago) in order to support their work *in* the county, bringing much-needed additional income to their families. While this model worked entrepreneurially to support people already *of* the county, many artists from off who continue to work in studios surrounding the Penland School of Crafts are using this model to support their lives in Mitchell County's otherwise stilted economy. In an unacknowledged return to an earlier model of Penland's own means of support, the business model of the artists in Mitchell County is serving as a resource – a means of a kind of artistic or entrepreneurial professionalism, for Mitchell County's students who may desire to *stay* in the county they call home, while still doing work that has personal meaning for them.

Art-Making to Educe Communication

Sitting in the back of a fourth grade classroom on an early June afternoon at the end of the school year, I joined Meg and the fourth grade teachers at Deyton in Spruce Pine at their end-of-year program evaluation meeting. Knowing that I desired to learn more of their perspective on the book project, the teachers had invited me to join them at this meeting; Meg and I talked about questions I could ask (in which she was interested) beforehand. At one point, listening to some of the joys and challenges of working through the book project, I abruptly asked: "What does it mean to teach *here*? Here in this school, in Mitchell County, in America in 2011?" Apologetically, I added, "It's an absurdly open question." The conversation that ensued is worth reading in its entirety.

> Rhonda: But it's a good one.
> Jesica: And sitting here, it's a privilege to listen to you talk about teaching. It's clear that you have passion and are really good at what you do. So if you're willing to share, I'm all ears.
> Bette: The first thing that jumps into my mind is how you love to *teach*, but you have to teach – you have constantly tell yourself, "Okay, you *love to teach*! Just

teach." Okay, now end of grade tests are coming. And yes, you love to teach and they're into it and everything, but *is that enough* for them to get a 3 or 4? If I do this *this* way, will I … And you're thinking, "Yes! They're into it, it's *got* to be what they need." And it's so … it's this balancing act between you love it but you can get *so bogged down* – I mean, you just have to *pray* about, "Okay, enjoy the kids, get passionate about the book, and …"
Dana: It is *hard* to find anything enjoyable about teaching these days. This is one thing that I kind of look forward to that makes the day a little more enjoyable.
Bette: Oh yes, I agree – I agree.
Paula: Yes.
Dana: Because *this* is more like how I used to teach twenty years ago.
Bette: Oh yes.
Dana: When I first started teaching, I could do so many more things with the kids that were freer and more … involved them more, and …
Paula: Let *them* plan things, and …
Dana: Like teaching about Reedy Birch [a town of local importance], the town of Reedy Birch, and things like that. And there's just no *time*. And if there was time, is it something you're supposed to be addressing according to what they tell you have to teach?
Bette: And you *know it is*, you know it is. I mean, if they read that whole Social Studies Weekly - because the test is just an endurance reading test. It's long – it's huge, and if you have attention-deficit issues … it's not that they can't comprehend, it's just that they run out of focus. So I think that's the hard thing about teaching. I mean I love it, I love the children, you have to constantly, you know … find enjoyment. Find endurance.
(Mumbling agreement, a general pause.)
Bette: And there's the … I mean, we live in a *great* area, but there are still so many children who are struggling. Whether it's through drugs, or divorce, or … so you've got all that on top of it too, when you're just trying to love on them and be good to them, and if only *that* were enough to make it through, to make it … things like that. But this is a really good project to help us remember – to bring back that joy.

After a year of getting to know these teachers in the classroom and in the community, I knew that they cared a lot about their students. The leadership environment in Deyton, I believe, maintained more of a sense of camaraderie, idea sharing, and a kind of school-wide community of practice than at the elementary school across town. Teachers at Spruce Pine were asked to post their lesson plan objectives on their chalkboards each day for students and visitors alike to have a sense of the curricular objectives met.

On one hand, Penland could easily use this conversation and information to justify winning grant money for Meg's continued work in the schools. On the other hand, this kind of conversation almost reifies teachers' perceptions, perhaps, that *they* are not and cannot work as artists. In her critical analysis of airline pilots, organizational scholar Karen Ashcraft (2005) observed that, for the pilots with whom she spoke, a popular narrative that their profession was under siege trumped any offering of empirical support to the contrary, prompting a level of resistance from the pilots seemingly incongruous to their material reality. From this observation, she concludes that, despite material evidence to the contrary, the widely-circulated narrative, in this case, carried "the material weight of lived experience" (p. 84). When asked about teachers' participation in the process of making art, Meg's intern Adrienne exclaims that the older the art-makers, the less confidence she saw in them. Third and fourth graders were willing to experiment and explore, artistically. Tenth graders were more timid, happy to paint but unwilling to take risks that might bring about negative responses from their peers. As a group, to Adrienne, teachers were the most timid about art-making. Adrienne finally exclaimed, "They just don't have the confidence, which is so backwards!" I do *not* bring this up to find yet another way of blaming teachers for the status of education, but rather to make a point about the contested crafting of professional selves. As Ashcraft (2005) writes, "the contested meaning of anyone's labor, body, and identity is more than a quarrel over possible selves. It is a discursive struggle for the right to occupational control, professional class status, and the economic and social standing of a job" (p. 85).

At the particular school where this conversation occurred, Gary Moore, the principal, is deeply concerned about *caring* for students, working with teachers to best

meet that goal. Gary and I spoke during the midst of end of grade testing, in a small, cinder blocked once-closet, because there were students taking tests in his windowed office at the front of the building. The sound from our interview from this sequestered space would not disturb his students. Sighing in submission to the pressure of testing, it seemed, Gary proudly spoke of dynamic teachers who were not afraid to tell him what they needed and wanted in order to care for their students best. Gary speaks of Meg's teaching work with admiration, noting that she's so capable of adapting fluidly around what he had believed was a structural impossibility of the project: time. In Deyton, which is not making adequate yearly progress (under No Child Left Behind), they have had to plan in order to meet the remediation guidelines set forth by the state. An "innovation" under these guidelines was a 90 minute mandatory "silent" reading block at the beginning of every day. He did not think they could continue the book project in the schools, he said with sadness, but Meg figured out how to conform her bookmaking into the time that the school's schedule allowed her. Meg was able to learn to teach the books in different parameters and timeframes than originally conceived around what appeared to be a mandatory dictate from the school– beyond Gary's control, he perceived. Beyond the connection with something "larger than" the schools and the work the schools can do, broadly, Gary highlights the fluidity of Meg's artistic practice in the integration of artwork and caring in the day-to-day work of the teachers in his building. I asked about the relationship between Meg's work and the work of the art teacher – and all of the teachers – for that building, and Gary responded:

> Meg doesn't try to come in here and do something … her emphasis is totally different, but they're sort of "one" as well, they make sense. Meg isn't trying to come in here and do *her* thing, and vice versa. And the kids love, as I said earlier – we have so many of our students who excel in some form or fashion in that area

> who really struggle in academics. And from that perspective it helps them tremendously. And I've seen – when I was at the high school in particular, I've seen a student that just – he did a fantastic job, you know with arts and things at Penland, and he struggled in his home life, he struggled in academics, but he found a niche there. That's the whole point of it, to begin with.

Similar to how the fourth grade teachers articulated that this artistic way of working wove itself into a way of navigating a system in which they found themselves relatively unable to move, Gary's observations highlight the emotional capacities that are more easily connected to an artistically imagined mode of working as opposed to the ways of organizing time and teaching he perceived available to him as a principal.

Meg's work *as* an artist, rather than perceived as threatening – in this sense – is a resource for emotional energy and the creation of space *for self* in ways that the delimited roles of "teacher" and "principal" do not allow. Her presence in the schools, legitimated by both Penland's expert status and the Mitchell County Schools, bestows upon her practice *as an artist amd as a teacher* an institutional legitimacy otherwise *not* granted to Mitchell County's educators *or* Penland's artists. In fact, it is Meg's presence *as a Penland artist* in the schools to which Mitchell County educators seem to connect the resources of *working artistically*, finding a niche, crafting a space. While Meg's presence as a *professional teacher and* at Penland is that which is now, interestingly, finally being legitimized as professional work for which Penland, organizationally, desires finally to "sign" as its own.

Teachers as Artists and Artists as Professionals

Artists' work is to communicate (Langer, 1957; Risatti, 2007), but artists also struggle with and through material. The boundaries of sign-systems and semiotic registers are the boundaries of artists' means to communicate with their audiences. Craftwork,

though communicative, entails more than communication; the boundaries against which craftworkers must play are the material limitations of that which they use to create something with use-value. In this sense, teaching is more craftwork than explicitly communicative; teachers are charged to fashion useful objects – beings – out of their students. In this sense, teachers are double-bound; they struggle against the boundaries of what their material – students – bring to their classrooms, while curricula, institutional policy, and abstract images of what "teaching" means simultaneously enable and constrain ways of moving in classrooms and with students. Teachers are professionalized because of the organization of education, and yet the very legitimization borne through the organization of education precludes the ways in which they ought to work (Vanderstaeten, 2007; Willis, 1977). Jennifer, a teacher at Gouge Primary School in Bakersville, addresses the separation between teachers and artists:

> Jennifer: I think that it's unfortunate that there are a lot of teachers who don't think that they're artists – don't think they have any artistic ability. Um, there are teachers that don't have the same enthusiasm for a project like this because they don't, uh, they don't love books. And they don't love art. And they haven't embraced that in themselves in any realm, so …
> Jesica: Whether that's running or gardening or …
> Jennifer: Yes, YES, exactly. And there aren't a lot of teachers – I don't know if I should say this on tape –
> Jesica: I can turn it off if you want –
> Jennifer: Well, no – they see that reading is important and math is important, because that's what the state tests – and they don't think of themselves as writers or artists and they don't think that there's value in writing and art. And, they … I hope that this project helps teachers – because we do it with the kids – I hope it gives teachers a little more of that. Because I know …

She trails off and off the record. Jennifer is an author – a published author – and describes "words" as her art. She is careful to say that she is *not* a teacher – she is an author who loves words and kids, who happens to teach. A woman who began teaching at 38 after a career in journalism, she says she is "not bound by many conventions" and that

"it's a good thing she gets good test scores," because she is not well-liked in the school by other teachers. Recounting a story of when she first began to teach, she tells about her surprise at receiving two awards after a six-month stint as a long-term substitute for one class. The awards she received were for, colloquially, best improvement with a low-level class, and highest test scores in the grade. They were for the same class. She was shocked, she recounted, not that her students had received the highest test scores in the grade, but that they had been tracked as "low-level." She claims she did not know this at the beginning of her stint, and simply expected a lot of them – working closely with them on up-and-moving hands-on projects.

Contrasting herself to other teachers in the building, Jennifer "entered into this line of work with a great deal of confidence and a cadre of experience from which to pull when learning how best to *communicate* and craft words with my students." Jennifer's students could often be found returning from adventures they had taken into various places in the school in order to scavenge materials for some project or play they had dreamed up in response to an open-ended question Jennifer had asked them. After our interview ended one day, we continued to tour around her room as she shared about her teaching practice. She pulled out some rubber gloves and reached into a stuffed filing cabinet – removing a black plastic trash bag. As I sat on top of a desk waiting (with a bit of trepidation) to see what she would pull from the bag, I can't say that I ever anticipated that the bag contained *a mummified cat*. In response to my face, probably showing equal parts horror and childlike fascination, she almost smirked: "Just think how many generations of children I can seduce to learn with this, especially the boys." In just a moment's time, she rattled off a list of things she could teach with the cat: Mummies,

Egypt, biology, folklore, bone structure, eco systems, weather, etc., in just a moment's time.

In Jennifer's words, the disciplinary function of "the professional" *and* the ways in which the professional is produced – and reproduced – in the schools, becomes very apparent. After critiquing the ways in which the district asks teachers to teach grammar, she showed me the method that she uses. I asked her if she had suggested it to the district. She had, but …

> Well, they think I'm crazy – a loose cannon. Look at her shoes! Look at those shoes! I saw her in the liquor store! ("Yeah, what were you doing there?") I don't go to church three times a week or whatever I need to do to be holy enough to be a good teacher. So, because it's coming from me …

I finished her sentence: "It has less credibility than it would if it were coming from someone else." She told me that she's talked to the school board, the county (where decisions about curriculum are made), and they will not listen or do anything about it. So she teaches what she wants to teach anyhow, because she knows that it works.

Of great note for this chapter is Jennifer's disdain of "teachers" as professionals and "teaching" as a profession. She explains that teachers in her building are limited by professionalized teacher training and a lack of confidence to break rules and social conventions, particularly in small-town western North Carolina. They are curtailed by the stakes of high-pressure testing which is now god in the curriculum; she perceives them as far too "safe" to make much interesting work to happen. The problem with teachers, Jennifer explains, is that they are *not* artists – artists do not become teachers, she says; lambs do. In the next chapter, I explore some of the ways in which teaching may deepen as an aesthetic practice, a deepening that I believe increases both the risk and possibility of teaching. For the short period of time that Meg's work comes into the schools and is

justified *by Meg's presence as an expert artist,* Jennifer feels as though her "unprofessional" teaching work is temporarily justified. For that period of time, Jennifer becomes an artist working within the boundaries of schools and what it means to be a teacher rather than an unprofessional teacher who should likely "reign it in."

Crafting pedagogical communication.

Converse to Jennifer's definition of "teacher" as an organizational role is the definition which we can attach to "artist." Jennifer describes "the artist" as any person who is dedicated to a practice of *any* sort, be it beekeeping, running, writing, or even, perhaps, teaching. Rather than a profession, role, or maker of a particular kind of good, Jennifer's definition of "artist" extends to those with any kind of care-filled practice, a sustained engagement with something over a period of time, in which the person is deeply engaged. Though it may read as such, I believe that Jennifer's dismissal of teachers is far more nuanced than public attacks on teachers' abilities that we see wholesale in the accountability cultures of public schooling, teacher education programs, and an emphasis on the necessity of professional development. Jennifer's critique of teachers and teaching, I believe, is that so many (as she perceives) *teach* as professionals, or have chosen teaching as a respectable profession. Teaching isn't a profession, and the continued attempts to "elevate" the status of teaching by conflating it with expert professions that deal with others will continue to undermine the value of, conversation about, and practice of teaching until teaching is elevated as its own value-filled work in its own right.

Jennifer contrasts teachers who teach *as professionals* to teachers who teach *as artists.* She acknowledges the risk, the vulnerability, of dedicating one's self fully to any

kind of practice. The profession of "teacher" is a title more easily garnered, as it is earned through a degree and an employer who, upon hiring one to fulfill a work-role, legitimates that title and role. It is a well-respected role broadly, but particularly in Mitchell County. In Mitchell County, blue-collar work is relatively difficult to find, white-collar work next to impossible. No-collar, entrepreneurial opportunities exist for the brave, the capable, the desperate, the committed, or those too stubborn to make another kind of life somewhere else. But even still, I suggest that the status of teaching in Mitchell County comes from its relative height on an otherwise unachievable scale of professions, not because the work of teaching is in and of itself a respected way of working. This link to the artist moves teaching beyond the professional, changing the metaphor of what it means to teach and from where teaching has value.

Frustrated by her negation of "being an artist," despite her relationship to the art, I finally said to Tamara, "even though you say that you're not an artist, I hear it all through how you talk about teaching." She responded to my statement with the following:

> Oh, I admire it. I admire it. I'm still not an artist, but I certainly can understand and recognize that art has value, and that it's good for my students. It's good for my students – they know that I'm not an artist, and if I can draw something and they can draw it better – that's awesome. It's a powerful thing to give your students … "My teacher drew this cruddy-looking whatever, and then she asked me to draw it and it was really good, and she and others are admiring it." That's awesome. You know, I don't have to be the best. I'm not. The sooner – maybe this is the first time that they have an adult in their lives who says, "I don't have the answer, I'm not really good at this," but it's really empowering for some students to be able to say, "My teacher drew a really crappy turtle, but let me show you mine. And she loved it, and displayed it and everything." That's good for these kids. And I'm okay with that. I'm good with that. I'm great with that – it's awesome.

In rejecting herself as "an artist," Tamara actually asserts herself as a teacher who has an attuned understanding to the negotiations of power and subjectivity that transpire in the

educative process. To be an artist moves beyond the role of the professional into something more nebulous, a process into which deep practice is necessary, with a perceived connection to resources of emotion, expression, and the manipulation of materials simply out of the realm of the possibilities of the professions. While the roles of teacher and artist and organizational member exist in the context of a broader society, they also exist within every person who has ever tried to practice most any kind of work. Penland exists to help people live creative lives, yet hides its craft at the periphery in the process of professionalization to gain stability and acclaim in the art world. Teachers loathe the grind and benchmarks, yet hide their craft inside their classroom walls so that they can be audit champions. Acknowledging myself as an artist is a risk, because that acknowledgement means that I have to leave behind the professional constructs which I have always believed will grant me value and legitimacy. The fear of losing that value and legitimacy, even though those are specters that kept *me* towing the line for too long, yells louder than the anxiety that I cannot work in the ways I need to work in the current organization of teaching and schooling. In the previous sentences, I use "I" because those statements are true about me, but they are true about so many of us who teach, who work as artists, or who push back at the ways in which are schooled by the educational organizations we have encountered.

In this chapter, I have traced the contours of professionalism and the ways in which it both shapes and is used intentionally to *give shape to* ways of working that are not professional. If professionalism as a metaphor for how we ought to work, then I seek to understand it more metonymically – moving from a hierarchical relationship between professionalism and work to one of association and ambiguity (Phelan, 1993). As such, in

Chapter Five, I move to the possibilities of aesthetic, ambiguous, and artistic practice in performing and supporting work. Professionalism is a desirable communicative practice, and yet the ways in which current uses of professionalism symbolize and enforce rationality, power, and clarity undermine the kinds of artistic and educative work of the Penland School of Crafts and teachers in the Mitchell County Schools. I was struck by the ways in which Jennifer and Tamara articulated the relationships between the work of teaching and Meg's artistic work; in the following chapter, I explore these relationships further.

Folks at Penland never asked if I was an artist. I am not sure whether they simply assumed I *was* an artist, on account of my affinity toward Meg's work, association with her, and my own ongoing writing – or whether, for those very reasons, they assumed that I was not. When teachers, principals, and community members, however, asked if I was an artist, I responded with a quick no. I teach at the university, I would tell them; I teach performance art in a theater, my background is in dance, I make things. I've taught dance and piano and have done arts-work in schools, I would tell them, but I'm not an artist. I teach, and I use the arts, I make things, I like beauty and to learn. Their responses were muddled – many of them, hearing my qualified no, disagreed with me – I was an artist, they said. A few, though, nodded with a twinge of something I could only imagine – projecting, perhaps – to be relief at listening to this befuddled response of someone betwixt and between very different-seeming ways of encountering and doing work in the world.

Chapter Five: Cultivating Artistic Practice

> More conservative minds deprive coincidence of meaning by treating it as background noise or garbage, but the shape-shifting mind pesters the distinction between accident and essence and remakes this world out of whatever happens. At its obsessive extreme such attention is the beginning of paranoia (all coincidence makes "too much sense"), but in a more capacious mind it is a kind of happy genius, ready to make music out of people's noise. Either way, the intelligence seriously is a constant threat to essences, for in the economy of categories, whenever the value of accident changes, so, too, does the value of essence. (Hyde, 1998, p. 100)

When Lewis Hyde writes about the "shape-shifting mind" (p. 100) in the above passage, he links the mythical figure of the trickster to the creative imagination of the artist. The trickster has a creative intelligence that blurs the lines between "essence" and "accident" because the trickster uses whatever she finds in the rubbish heap of the world to create things. Because the trickster uses whatever is at hand to make new things, the trickster's creations are inherently provocative. This capriciousness, coincidence, or "accidental" creation is what Hyde considers to be an instance of creative intelligence, a kind of associative intelligence often demonstrated in the arts. As a liminal, amoral boundary figure neither fully god nor man, the trickster often *creates* accident and contingency, turning the snow-globe of the world on its side just as the detritus from the last shake has begun to settle. Hyde (1998) writes not to conflate the trickster and the artist, but to juxtapose trickster stories with stories of "imagination in action" (p. 14), seeing what those juxtapositions may reveal. I begin this chapter with the trickster not because I think Meg or any artist is a trickster, but because in the creative capriciousness

that the trickster and the artist bring to contingency and accident, we see a kind of knowledge-making, risk, and learning encounter so often written out of the possibilities and practice of the professional and the organization of schooling. The trickster's world-building and knowledge-making processes, like those of the artist and the teacher, are deeply aesthetic practices. As we saw in the last chapter, the push for stability and standardization often labeled "professionalism" undercuts the freedom to move and work in the experiences in the Mitchell County Schools and the Penland School of Crafts.

In my initial imagination of Meg's work, I expected that her work bridged the disparate work of the Penland School of Crafts and the Mitchell County Schools. In its work as a bridge, I expected to encounter Meg's artistic work as a distinct way of working in both of the organizations, but particularly distinct from ways of working common to schools. Looking at Meg's artistic work as a communicative phenomenon articulated to both of these organizations, I was startled to see that her work *had a parallel* in the work of teachers in the Mitchell County Schools. One would think, then, that Meg's work would seamlessly integrate into teachers' work, since they were working through similar artistic processes despite calling one "teaching" and the other "art." Yet, a notable tension emerged as Meg's work as an artist became articulated to teachers' work *because the teachers would not acknowledge any similarities between their work and Meg's*. I expected to see Meg's beautiful artist work as a resource for Mitchell County School teachers, and what I found instead was that many teachers *were already working as artists* in the classrooms. The tensions still emerged, however – just not in the ways that I imagined. In this chapter, I discuss the essences of Meg's work as craft and the ways in which those very essences find parallels in the work of teaching. The rub is

that despite these parallels, most teachers do not identify as artists; in fact, many actively refuse that identification.

Mitchell County Non-Artists

Though Hyde contrasts the "conservative mind" and the "shape-shifting mind," I do not think that these types of "mind" are static. Improvisation, art-making, and creation all require great skill and practice (Albers, 1944; Booth, 2001; Eisenberg, 1990/2007; Hyde, 1998; Sennett, 2008). Skill, indeed, must be practiced and consistently engaged. The teachers and educators whom I encountered in Mitchell County were often far more capricious, at least in the context of the bookmaking project, than the organization of schooling, writ large, might lead us to expect. John Dewey (1916/1997) and others (Crawford, 2009; Deetz, 1992; Gini, 2000; Higgins, 2005; Kincheloe, 1999; Sennett, 2008) insist that vocation *itself* is pedagogical, meaning that the work that we do in the world teaches us about the possibilities we have in the world outside of work. Seeing such artistic work throughout teachers' processes of teaching made me wonder about these links between vocation and pedagogy, as inclined as I am to believe them.

At the heart of organizational scholar Stanley Deetz's (1992, 2005) warnings about "corporate colonization," for instance, is a deep sense that when corporate forms colonize our lives, we lose both the opportunities and ability to engage in other life-giving institutions like family, community, faith organizations, etc. Though corporate influences in the organization of education are only one part of its long history of standardization, Deetz's concept is helpful. I argue that the organization of schooling and education forecloses our possibilities to acknowledge, support, and deepen teaching as an aesthetic way of working. Or, at the very least, that the organization of teaching and

learning hinges on the assumption that teachers and students are more conservatively minded than creatively intelligent artists who can respond to contingency with creation and grace.

"We *are* experiences," insists media and education scholar Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005, p. 26), making a point about pedagogy and learning: we do not possess our own experiences; we *emerge* from them. Her premise is that if we do in fact emerge from experiences, then experiences of pedagogy, or places of learning, become remarkably important. Focusing on places of learning offers a different way of thinking and doing teaching and learning. Making a similar argument about the educative environment of teaching *for teachers,* philosopher Christopher Higgins (2005) summarily insists, "the educational imagination is still impoverished in this regard" (p. 442). Colloquially, experience is discussed as "an experience," marked and delimited within particular boundaries that separate *that experience* from another. Though the bounds of experience are bookended by natality and death (Arendt, 1958/1998), we often make sense of experience by segmenting it into more discrete categories: "experiences." I may well hold separate, for instance, experiences of working, of caring for children, of authoring, or of participating in the active life of a community. When writing of experience, Dewey (1934/2005) appears less interested in the reasons why we might desire to keep those moments of experiences separate from one another than in the conditions that mark and foster *aesthetic* experience.

Dewey sets out to look at the conditions that separate art from life, and the ways in which these conditions are so naturalized in the trappings and organization of our daily life that we believe that conditions that separate art and life are inherent in *art* and *artists*,

not because we have organized the art out of our lives. Dewey's method is to look to the stuff of life that characterizes aesthetic experiences in order to move more broadly to discuss aesthetic experience and aesthetic work. With this approach, Dewey deviates from an "art-centric" approach that *begins* with art objects and moves to art processes. Instead, he offers an approach that places art and aesthetic endeavor in relationship to their historical and cultural contexts. Dewey's approach resonates with the possibilities of thinking about teaching as aesthetic, deep, vocational work. As I began this research, I assumed that Meg's artistic work in the schools would provide meaningful and generative alternatives to the ways of organizing teaching and learning sanctioned and upheld by generalized curricula, national standards, and high-stakes testing.

Meg's enchanting and beautiful work seems to offer a richly generative alternative to the stilted and curtailed organization of teaching that to many teachers and administrators, seems dauntingly intractable. What are teachers saying as they embrace the possibilities of art in their classrooms when they reject the premise that they are artists? Does a teacher's negation of her artist-self undermine the possibilities of cultivating and deepening her teaching work as the negotiated emotional and communicative and knowledge-making process that it is? These are the kinds of questions I take up in this chapter, as I discuss the ways in which our local and cultural images of the artist enable and constrain the possibilities of deepening the aesthetic possibilities of teaching.

Gary Moore, the principal of Spruce Pine's Deyton Elementary School, says that he is not an artist because he does not make any art objects. "If anything, it's definitely dabbling…," he shared, as he talked about his love of music and his improvisatory way

of understanding leadership and what it means to teach. Tamara Houchard, a third grade teacher in Bakersville's Gouge Primary School, insists that she is not an artist because she cannot sing and "draws cruddy pictures," but described her teaching work with deep nuance and a capriciousness that was infectious. The fourth grade teachers at Deyton Elementary in Spruce Pine insisted, to a one, that they *were not artists*, yet when I responded to their refusals with the question, "Well, then, how do you teach these books if you're not artists?" they described their processes of teaching, sharing, and practicing with careful nuance. Though teachers and administrators in the district reject that they are artists, the deep work of teaching is more akin to aesthetic practice than the professional modes of work we so often try to associate with it.

Mitchell County is a place where the seductive image of "the artist" is alive and well. Even though Meg's presence in the schools has helped to bridge the distance between "the artist" of Penland and the rest of the happenings in the schools and community, there is still a tension between what it means to be an artist and what it means to be a teacher. In fact, my observations in the classroom over the year that I spent with Meg and teachers in the county led me to believe that the ever-present image of "the artist" in Mitchell County might indeed curtail possibilities of teachers and workers engaged in work not typically perceived to be "artistic" or "aesthetic." The association of "artists" with both the Penland School of Crafts and the extended Penland community of permanent Penland artists "from off," I believe, limit the symbolic access to "artist" those who work as artists in the county but are not Penland-affiliated *artists* or making Penland-like art. When such strong images of artists exist in such proximal distance from the day-to-day happenings of the schools and other ways of working, the "standard" for

who an artist can be may, ironically, become limited. Even I, who might count myself an artist in other contexts, frequently negated any identity as an "artist" when in Mitchell County, as I recounted at the end of the last chapter. I sometimes resented my lack of access – real or perceived – to this "artist" self.

At the end of the last chapter, we encountered fourth grade teacher Jennifer's distinction between teacher and artist and in it, her rejection of *being a teacher*. Jennifer identifies *as* an artist and asserts that the problem with education is that too many teachers *are teachers* and not artists. I agree with Jennifer's assertion, though perhaps not the way in which she articulates the problem. Teaching, as a practice, has been – or perhaps always has been – stripped of its deep practice (Taubman, 2009) and instead, organized around systems of education (Vanderstaeten, 2007). Those very educational systems are *themselves* organized around assumptions about patriarchal epistemologies, rationality, corporate economies of scale, and efficiency (Grumet, 1988; Ravitch, 2010; Taubman, 2009; Tyack, 1974; Willis, 1977). Yet often, our very critical discussion of the organization of teaching and schooling omits attention to the constantly negotiated *work of teaching* (Grumet, 1988). As I discussed in Chapter Four, as the image of "the professional" has disciplined the work of teaching, the image of what it means to teach *here and now* is quite limited in terms of the economic, associative, and allocative resources available to teachers. At the very same time, the desire for the resources achievable *though* association *with* professionalism perpetuates some of the limitations of deep and imaginative teaching work.

In the last chapter, I wrote of the common desires for professionalism among the Penland School of Crafts and the Mitchell County Schools, which undercuts the artistic

communal work possible within the bounds of both organizations. As Penland's professional teaching artist, Meg's artwork performs almost contradictory roles on Penland's' campus and in the Mitchell County schools. At Penland, her teaching is hardly the kind of artistic work regarded as part of the spectrum of skills and practices a typical adult student at the school might learn in its professional studios. As we saw in the comments of the fourth grade teachers and in Jennifer's comments at the end of the last chapter, Meg's deft artistic skill positions her as an expert artist. In the schools, Meg's status as an expert artist grants her a legitimacy that enables her to work differently than the ways in which teachers typically have to work in schools. After this chapter's phenomenology of Meg's work as an artist and the work of teaching, I conclude this project with a discussion of why teachers' negation of "artist" *matters*.

Art Versus The Artist

Throughout the process of observing, participating in, and listening to teachers and administrators talk about Meg's work at Penland and in the Mitchell County Schools, even as professionalism emerged as an important theme, something *else*, often under the surface, seemed to bubble as teachers simultaneously expressed admiration for Meg's artistic work while rejecting their own abilities to "be artists." In all of my interviews, I asked those in the Mitchell County Schools if *they were artists*; with the exception of Jennifer, they claimed that they were not. Artists' work is relatively undervalued in society – I believe this may stem from the seemingly disconnected work of artists from experiences of daily life.

> In the tradition of the aesthetics of genius and charismatic imagination, a social selection is performed: the truly creative social actors, the designated elect who generate and release innovations, are marked apart - and marked up for symbolic ascension. (Raunig, Ray, & Wuggenig, 2011, p. 1)

Or, as Suely Rolnik (2011) writes, artists' work "puts the world to work and reconfigures its landscape" (p. 24). Art is relatively safe; artists, however, possess a symbolic language and ability to objectify experience that threatens to undo the current arrangement of things. The Urban Institute (Jackson, et. al, 2003) reports findings from a national poll on people's attitudes toward artists: while 96% of respondents said they were "greatly inspired and moved by various kinds of art" in their lives (p.23), only 27% of respondents said that "artists contribute 'a lot' to the good of society" (p. 23). Their research indicates that though "art," generally, is held in high cultural esteem, the work that actual artists do – their contributions – are valued far less than the products they produce. This is the premise for former chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts Bill Ivey's (2008) recent book, *Arts, Inc.*, in which he argues that the American government's unwillingness to engage artists and their art as part and parcel to ongoing debates and performances of democracy is undermining the creative heritage and future of the country.

Across my experiences in Mitchell County, art was lauded – students' art-work and art practices were upheld. In a comment characteristic of much of the sentiments I encountered in the county, Tamara Houchard, a third grade teacher at Deyton Primary in Bakersville, answered (when I asked her about why she liked to incorporate art into her teaching:

> But art touches everybody. When you read … when you look at art, and you take it in … and if you can connect that with any other knowing – if you make that emotional connection, that's what makes the learning really lasting. Which is why I do more and more, and what I love about the art that we already do.

Later in our conversation, she continued:

> If I can do art in anything, I will do it. For me, it's just a – I'm just frustrated with my own lack of knowledge, and quite frankly, talent. And I'm okay with that – I

> mean, I hate it, but that's just the way it is. So that's something I would like to increase my knowledge and expertise in. But I find that it reaches the students who are reluctant, who are bored, who have talent in art but maybe not knowledge of it. It adds a nice level. And for those students who are just into numbers, and language, it's good for them too. It's good therapy for them. I'm finding that students, more and more as the years progress, don't have cutting skills, don't have gluing skills, don't do things with their hands. Just – when you give them a lump of clay, they just about salivate. Because they haven't done that, they haven't done clay or play-doh or anything. And it's sad – they lose that.

Tamara, other teachers, and administrators were willing to engage in art, speak of its importance, and sing its praises, but generally insisted that *they were not artists*.

I generally believe that artists' work and organizational work could and, perhaps, should be one and the same. Metaphorically, the image of human hands shaping clay into a beautiful and useful vessel in relationship to others nicely parallels the image of people working with other people to organize their potential into beautiful and useful shapes. Particularly in Mitchell County, where the work of artists in Penland's studios is to teach others to live creative lives through mastery of skill and its application to the material world, the metaphor of the artist rings nicely with the image of what teaching and schooling could be. Most often, though, artists' work and organizational work not only do not intersect; they are often dialectically opposed.

The structures surrounding artists' work and organization work are typically very separate. Artists' work is often self-managed; self-imposed structures and limitations force creative and innovative choices, or are forcibly set in place in order to spark the creativity necessary to create new perspectives or relationship with material. Often, the artist, or social and economic realities, set these limitations. Arts integration specialist Arnie Aprill (2004, 2010) writes about the primary difference between teachers and artists as a different relationship to the compulsion to create. Artists, he writes, are

compulsed to create – they must create. So when roadblocks or limitations or limited resources crop up, as they almost inevitably do, artists' compulsion to create drives them in different directions, around problems. After spending time in Mitchell County, I no longer agree with Aprill's distinction between artists and teachers. It is too easy.

I was puzzled by teachers' rejection that they were artists – for most of the teachers, their rejection of "being an artist" seemed as though it was about more than a seeming "lack" of artistic skill. Somehow, the concept of working as an artist did not – could not – translate into the work of teaching or leading in an educational setting. Jennifer's cat, which I mentioned in Chapter Four, is an excellent example of this disconnect.

Unless one is a biologist, a museum curator, or perhaps an Egyptologist, keeping a mummified cat in the office is not necessarily a typical professional choice. That mummified cat that Jennifer keeps wrapped up in a plastic bag in her closet is no exception, particularly when she recounts the story of how she acquired it. On the day she showed me her mummified cat, she shared the story of how she found it. She was replacing the insulation in her house, a double-wide trailer, she specified, and the insulated space underneath was too narrow for her to look while she removed the old insulation. Jennifer pulled and kicked at the old insulation blindly, and an object fell out of the insulation on top of her. The "object" was a dead cat! "I said every bad word I knew," she confided, still shuddering some at the very unpleasant surprise of a dead cat falling on top of her. Curious, she inspected the cat, and thought that it looked mummified. Thinking it to be a pretty remarkable specimen, she took it to the biology department at Eastern Tennessee State University, where she was working on her MAT at

the time. They were amazed, she said, and suspected that the intensely dry heat of her insulation had perfected mummified and preserved the cat. They wanted her to donate the cat to their department, "with a plaque on it that said my name, and everything." She refused. They warned her that it would disintegrate over time. She retorted to them – and to me, as I stood before her in her classroom (perhaps looking a bit shell-shocked or skeptical): "I don't care; that's okay. Just think how many generations of children I can seduce to learn with this, especially the boys." When Rolnik (2011) writes about what the world does to us, she writes:

> Whatever the means of expression, we think/create because something in our everyday lives forces us to invent new possibilities, in order to incorporate into the current map of meaning the sensible mutation that is seeking passage in our day-to-day experience. (p. 24)

I think that Jennifer's instantaneous designation of the cat as a seductive teaching tool and learning device is an act of pedagogical art – a kind of translation of contingent experiences into an object useful to generate surprise, delight, and learning in her students.

Teachers, while engaged in a face-to-face self-other negotiation that sometimes characterizes professional work, are cultural intermediaries, mothers, coaches, counselors, spiritual guides, provocateurs, and wranglers all wrapped up into one. Or as Brandon, a fourth grade teacher at Deyton Primary in Bakersville answered when I asked him what it meant to be a teacher: "The teacher wears the policeman, psychiatrist, fireman, nurse, you know, whatever, hat, throughout the year." He explained that regardless of what the curriculum says, teachers just have to put on whatever hat they need, because regardless the role, he said, teachers are the first responders to any sort of thing that might emerge at any given moment in the classroom.

Squeezing the work of teaching into the category of the professional, discounting it as feminine, or lauding it as a valorized service to society's well-being bring discursive and practical closure to what could otherwise be a rich and aesthetic way of working. Yet squeezing the pedagogical into the professional is such a common practice that to suggest otherwise raises serious concern. Christopher Higgins' (2005) questions, meant to help us imagine a teacher deeply entrenched in her own teaching work, seem particularly provocative, as if they somehow make the role of the teacher perverse:

> Can we imagine this teacher? Can we imagine someone responsive to students and skilled at her craft who nonetheless chooses teaching not primarily to help others, but because it is her ambition and question, her plan for ongoing growth and a rich life? (p. 442)

Higgins (2005) argues that our educational imaginations are too impoverished to imagine the work of teaching as a kind of working that a person – likely a woman – would pursue *because she was good at it*, or because that through doing the work of teaching, she was feeding her ambition and desire to build a rich life *for herself*, not for others. Echoing a statement I made at the end of the last chapter, *we must understand teaching as a way of working valuable in its own right* in order to think generatively about supporting meaningful teaching and learning in schools. Though rejecting the title "artist," Tamara speaks of the ways in which she works artfully as a teacher, willing to risk her own teacherly expertise and subjectivity for the pedagogical sake of her students. From the pride and pleasure Tamara expressed as she discusses her work, I believe that she has crafted teaching into a vocation from which she gleans some of the provocative pleasures of an ongoing and rich life to which Higgins (2005) alludes.

Art Versus the Audit

Teaching, like many face-to-face professions (Britzman, 2009; Vanderstaeten, 2007), involves intimate interactions with an all-too-unknowable other. Teaching, in particular, is marked by an excess of contingency and ambiguity. If teaching were only about communicating a curricula or managing bodies or producing numbers, it might be far more predictable work. But the heart of teaching, indeed, is a pedagogical relationship and hopefully, what Ellsworth (2005) calls *learning as non-compliance*. *Learning as non-compliance* is Ellsworth's (2005) term for the kinds of boundary-pushing connections that people make when they take information provide them through the curricula and apply it to their own views of the world around them as they make their own knowledge of the world rather than simply consuming foregone conclusions.

The stance often associated with learning as non-compliance is the arms-crossed, slightly belligerent "Why?" or "So what?" Mitchell County teachers are people, often women, who come into schools and find 30 growing bodies whose discomfort in desks and hungry bellies come into play with their hurt feelings and excitations and the hugs they are or are not getting at home – 30 individuals with all kinds of stories and experiences and delights in sunshine and spiders and fears of spiders and swings. She has kids who come in smelling like the crystal meth that is cooked in their houses while they're asleep, kids who come in sleepy because one of mom's ex-boyfriends spent the evening hitting the walls of the trailer until mom went outside and he switched to her, and kids who come back after two weeks missing because dad had to go two states over on mysterious business for a while. She has kids who come in smiling and well-fed after a warm breakfast and a hug at the bus-stop, kids who come in with new library books in

their backpacks to read because they already finished the class books, and kids who never miss a day of school and who always hand in their homework right on time. According to the state, this teacher's success or failure with these students depends on the students' scores on an end-of-year exam (Ravitch, 2000; 2010).

In the current audit culture, the disciplinary mechanism of benchmark testing shapes teachers and the work of teaching almost beyond recognition. I believe accountability, as a practice, is a very important component to good art-making and good teaching. At heart of craftwork, for instance, is the notion that a craftworker must be accountable to the material she uses and to the human hands which will use the object she fashions. Currently, "accountability" in schools is so equated with benchmark examinations that when I asked Gary, Deyton's principal, about "accountability," he immediately moved to testing – which was happening in his school the day that we met for our interview:

> This is the most frustrating part of the school year. I hate testing. I just don't like the way the test is administered. But we've gotta do it because the state tells us we have to. But the students are supposed to score level 3 and 4 on the end of grade math and reading in 3rd, 4th, and 5th. Also, the 5th grade has a science test. If they score a 1 or a 2, then we remediate those students and re-test them. Seldom do we ever hold a student, retain a student because they scored a 1 or a 2. Usually there's a very good reason why they do, and we always take that into account. It's tough on the teachers. It's especially tough – if you can imagine being a third grade student having to face all of this – it's very tough for kids, too. It is. I don't think it gives you a true picture of what a student learns, personally.

Nor do I believe that testing gives a good sense of what a teacher teachers, either. In the school, students' mistakes or resistances can be remediated, There is, however, little space for teachers' "mistakes" in schooling where successful teaching is equated with students' end-of-year exam scores (Ravitch, 2010; Taubman, 2009). I asked Bette what it meant to teach in Mitchell County, now, and she immediately responded, "The first thing

that jumps into my mind is how you love to *teach*, but you have to teach." In her response, she distinguished one type of *teaching* from a second type of teaching. The former, *teaching*, is the work that she says she loves – work measured by students' looks of knowing, developments as human beings over the course of the year she spends with them, and the new knowledge that they create. She continued:

> You have constantly tell yourself, "Okay, you *love to teach*! Just teach." Okay, now end of grade tests are coming. And yes, you love to teach and they're into it and everything, but *is that enough* for them to get a 3 or 4. If I do this *this* way, will I … And you're thinking, "Yes! They're into it, it's *got* to be what they need." And it's so … it's this balancing act between … you love it but you can get *so bogged down* – I mean, you just have to *pray* about, "Okay, enjoy the kids, get passionate about the book, and …"

She continued to critique the test that students have to take for its lack of learning objectives, calling it an "endurance test." In the next breath, however, she cited her *own need* to find endurance to keep on teaching in this kind of environment. "I mean, I love it, I love the children. But you have to constantly, you know … find enjoyment. Find endurance."

Across the county at Gouge Primary, Tamara, much like Jennifer, distinguishes herself from many of the other teachers in their building in her approach to teaching and learning. Unlike Gary's leadership approach at Spruce Pine, which involves his constant presence in classrooms and cross-school sharing of teaching methods on a regular basis, the leadership approach of Gouge's principal seems to be, essentially, to leave his teachers alone. Jennifer celebrated his absence, glad that he didn't "stick his nose in" to her classroom all the time; she understood that absence as marker of trust. From Jennifer and Tamara's descriptions of other Gouge teachers' styles, however, I believe that this "absent" approach fosters a great variety of teaching responses. Tamara considers herself

a researcher who has, and continues to build an expertise in teaching and learning. Her Master's research in education was on experiential education and hands-on learning. She says that she often defends choices she makes in the classroom *with* research, which frees her up to teach *as she wants* rather than how common knowledge-based fears about "failing" students' benchmark exams typically merit.

> There are some teachers who stress about the test and stress the students out about test, doing a lot of what they say is "test prep," but what they really do is exhaust the students. They do so much of drilling of "blah, blah, blah," – really, you're just teaching them a format of testing and not the core fundamentals of what they should be learning. And really, you know – testing is a necessary evil. I understand the reasons for it. I mean, they have to be able to compare apples to apples, and that's the only way on a large scale to do that across the state. But it's only three days. And, I mean, it doesn't make *my* mind up about whether or not I think my students are prepared for the next grade level. I mean, if I don't know my students in 180 days, three days doesn't make any difference.

Tamara does not abandon her students to the form of the test, however:

> I do some: "So, if you chose answer A …" we have probably five days of it. I don't want [the test] to be a new format for them, because I don't think that's fair either. Bubbling – they don't know how to bubble. So we do some tests throughout the year where they have to bubble. It's good hand-eye coordination and a fine motor skill; I don't care. But, we talk about, "Okay, this was answer A, and it was incorrect. This is the mistake that you probably made." But instead, I have them find the mistake – "What do you think the problem is here? What do you think is the common mistake?" Having them figure out the common mistake was far more helpful then "Yay, check, you got the right answer," because they could have guessed. So, why do you think that A was the wrong answer? Having them figure that out was more helpful than anything. They're like, "Oh, [the test makers] are tricky." And I'm like, "Yes, they are, so don't let them trick you. Show all your work in your books, and don't let them trick you. Do the best that you can do. We've done great all year long, you'll be fine."

Tamara's powerful process of *decoding* the test for the students is a way in which she teaches them the language, or symbolic form, that they need to know in order to *literally* pass the test. She does so almost cynically, as we see in her willingness to discuss the "trickiness" of the test-makers with her students and their collusion in the

process of not falling subject to those tricky test-makers who try to dupe them into giving the wrong answers. This act is not a falsely generous act, as Freire (2000) describes some acts by people in power who reach out to offer those with less power "tools" that may help them to assimilate into an oppressive culture. Instead, her way of distancing and objectifying the test as a particular symbolic form with which students can engage – critically, even, but engaging nonetheless – operates more similarly to what educational scholar Lisa Delpit (1995) advocates when she writes about the importance of a politically engaged curriculum with low-income students of color. Delpit's (1995) suggested curriculum is one that teaches "standard English" *as a second language* while openly interrogating the dominant culture in which "standard English" is a salient symbolic form. In this way, she suggests, the bilingualism becomes a tool with which students may participate in the symbolic forms of a dominant culture while, at the same point, continuing to validate and valorize their own ways of communicating and performing identity. Though in neither Delpit's (1995) or Tamara's example do we see a way of openly resisting or fighting against the pervasiveness of an oppressive cultural form, we do see ways in which teachers, in both instances, engage in a politically relevant and agentic process of practicing a skill with students.

An aesthetic practice of teaching is somewhat different from this interesting and powerful response to the dominant experience of teaching and learning. An aesthetic practice of teaching requires negotiations and acknowledgements of different kinds of tensions, and a different kind of organization of experience – including a rejection of the powerful claim that teaching is a noble act of service (Higgins, 2005).

Teaching as an aesthetic form of work requires a different attention to the ways in which teachers choose how to organize the pedagogical and curricular spaces of learning in their classrooms and schools. In a footnote on "organizing," Freire (1970/2000) distinguishes between "organization" for oppression and "organization":

> In the "organization" which results from acts of manipulation, the people - mere guided objects - are adapted to the objectives of the manipulators. In true organization, the individuals are active in the organizing process, and the objectives of the organization are not imposed by others. In the first case, the organization is a means of "massification," in the second, a means of liberation. (p. 148)

Freire (1970/2000) further complicates his discussion of organization with his insistence that with the liberation, or freedom, of "true" organization comes a great deal of responsibility – such responsibility, in fact, that sometimes people capitulate their willingness to act or to resist. On one hand, the fear of action is very literal, the kind of fear that comes from thinking about the repercussions of the action. In the audit culture of schools which permeate the very experience of teaching, then, the act of deviating from a very "safe" and test-preparatory method of teaching would naturally inspire fear about the imagined outcomes of one's actions. Whether those outcomes were students' 1s and 2s on their end-of-year exams, the school not making that chimera of adequate yearly progress, or having one's name listed in the paper as a public shaming act, the potential negative outcomes are dire. Like Bette said, *the fear of whether it's enough* rings at the back of even a more compliant teacher's mind. In addition to this literal fear, however, Freire (1970/2000) writes that people also experience a more existential fear of the authority and responsibility and *openness* that come along with the possibilities of freedom.

The kind of obsequiousness to patriarchy that we see among *women* who have fought their ways to the top ranks of organizations by *acting like men*, for instance, is an example of this existential kind of fear. In an organization of education that philosopher Christopher Higgins (2005) describes as characterized by "its shabby surroundings, its disruptions of continuity and purpose, its nagging asceticism, and its distinctive kitsch," (pp. 460-461), exerting "a narrowing influence on the intellectual and emotional lives of teachers" (p. 461), I can easily imagine a teacher's desire to cling to the testing, or a standardized curriculum. Power and legitimacy lie in those mechanisms, even as they discipline. Much like the ways in which "the professional" is enticing, the test is disciplinary *and* also a defined means to some kind of externally-observable success. In oppressive organizations, the locus of power is at least acknowledgeable. In today's organization of schooling, "figuring out" how to get one's students to pass those exams is a way – the only way, perhaps – that a teacher can really show any so-called objective ways of succeeding at work.

Benchmark testing and high-stakes accountability standards establish a culture in which performance-oriented pedagogies have more value than competence-based pedagogies (Hall et al., 2007; Taubman, 2009, 2011), particularly when teachers' work is graded alongside benchmarked quantifications of students' work. *Every* educator with whom I spoke in Mitchell County named benchmark and audit culture and their disciplinary influences on the work of teaching. Sociologist of education Christine Hall and her colleagues (2007) write that in such an educational climate, work that emphasizes technical mastery and individual performance are favored; there is evidence of this kind of emphasis in Mitchell County's schools.

Easier to segment into units, delineate in time and space in the curriculum, and attending more specifically to the stipulated curriculum, individually-oriented performance pedagogies ensure a more-easily controlled pedagogic vocabulary because the language of learning fits into the segments of the curricula, the tests, and the 50 minute periods. Competence pedagogies, on the other hand, might wander, take longer, and build associatively rather than linearly; competence pedagogies are more difficult to break into disparate "units" and "lessons" because they focus on "the world the children inhabit" (Hall et al., 2007, p. 616). But as Higgins (2005) reminded us, the pedagogies that teachers *teach* are also pedagogical experiences of doing work. Teaching in this way is based on solo performance, not in the improvisatory practice of a users' craft. Part of what characterizes Meg's work as a teaching artist is the way in which she works *with* others – students and teachers, certainly, but also with the larger organizations of the Penland School of Crafts and the Mitchell County Schools to negotiate her teaching work. That Meg explains her teaching as *an extension of her art-work* is not surprising to me, given the extent to which the continuing bookmaking work in the schools is a carefully negotiated and tension-filled, often improvisatory, performance. The work, I think, is often as exhausting as it is life-giving.

Users' Crafts

A characteristic of Meg's work as an artist and the nature of the Penland School of Crafts that does not seem to extend into the Mitchell County Schools is a committed artistic engagement in communities of practice. Even though Meg is often the lone Penland "representative" in the Mitchell County Schools, her social and aesthetic lives are steeped with deep relationships with other artists who support one another's work

physically, socially, and aesthetically. I had the privilege of meeting some of Meg's fellow Mitchell County artists and dear friends during my time in the county, and these meetings helped me to understand the ways in which her work as a teaching artist is artistic both in content *and in process.* It is, indeed, a user's craft and a communally-supported affair. The following scene develops this sense quite well.

Sonorous breaths of the accordion mingle with the melody from the violin as bow meets string; the women play their instruments with open eyes and faint grins. The violinist walks as she plays, her bare feet gripping the worn, clean boards of the wooden floor in the places where the thick colors of the rug do not reach. Meg, the accordion player, sits on the piano bench, facing the other players. She will later spin around and play the keys of the piano instead of those of the accordion now in her arms. Across from her stands a tsimbl, a Yiddish hammer dulcimer, probably homemade. As the hammer hits the tsimbl's strings, another line joins into this melody – contrasting and amplifying the contributions of the other two. The bass line comes from the cello, its weathered-looking body still resonant and deep as the bow moves with equal parts grace and strength under an arm attuned to the music's pull. The windows and doors all open, this music seeps into the lush valley. They do not speak much at this Sunday afternoon band practice. One begins to play and the others join as they hear a need, a possibility, a place; the music is a conversation. Many of them began learning to play their instruments in order to play this Klezmer music; they have been playing as long as they have played together. Klezmer, folk, movement – they all have their own stories of joy and sorrow and the need for this expressive Eastern European music. A curious infant tips an old coffee can filled with spools of string onto the floor. Her soft curls have tightened in the

cool humidity; she is surrounded by these musicians and neighbors who love her. She fingers the string, pulling and wrapping it as she crawls about: her own exploration of sound and texture. I join her on the floor and we watch the music as it leaps across the room, feeling its vibrations in the floor.

The band I describe above was drawn together through a desire to play this particular kind of music that affected each player at points in their earlier lives. They committed to learning their instruments as they learned the music and one another's sounds. They have now played together for years. When they speak about the music their band currently plays, they say they are pleased with the sound. Their pleasure with the sound dims to the ways in which they describe how they can now work together and improvise as they play. "It's a conversation; we don't have to speak." Sennett (2008) writes of improvisation as "a user's craft" (p. 236), a craft that relies upon a person's skills, which can be developed and improved. "Anticipation can be strengthened; people can become better at negotiating borders and edges; they can become more selective about the elements they choose to vary" (Sennett, 2008, p. 237). In short, improvisation may appear magical, but improvisation is not purely magic. Improvisation involves skill that develops over time and in relationship to practice, material, and others. Learn to do anything by kit, or with step-by-step directions, even if difficult, and then attempt to do the same thing with improper tools and no guidelines. The improvisatory process will be much more challenging, requiring more skill. Most artistic work requires a deep level of skill (Crawford, 2009; Dewey, 1934/2005; Eisenberg, 1990/2007; Sennett, 2008), particularly if those skills are used for problem-solving or working off the grid. I would

describe this band's work as "practiced improvisation," improvisation as the use-goal of the skills they practice separately and together as they continue to craft their music.

As an outsider to this musical practice, it was apparent to me that in the interplay of music, instruments, space, and silence, relationships existed and grew. The quartet of music-makers acknowledged sour notes, unfamiliar rhythms, and worked through them. Occasionally discord halted the music; it always began again. The process I witnessed that day was neither finished performance nor finished product, rather the ongoing process of crafting music. They use no written music; there *is* no written music for this tradition of music, which is based upon aural skill, memory, and collective practice. Within the tradition, however, they garner an improvisatory freedom to incorporate interests and inspirations and also mistakes, perhaps, to continue to grow the traditional Klezmer music which drew them and their instruments. They perform at festivals, weddings, and cultural events around their local community, though they are practiced amateurs. The give and take, push and flow, and endless repetition and rehearsal part of their process are characteristic of ways of working in craft. In their shoulder-to-shoulder workspace, with an experience-rich process, they craft music. What do teachers craft?

Principals in the schools refer to bookmaking as "Meg's work." Individual kids are praised for their artistic contributions. One of the assistant principals at Mitchell High went so far as to suggest that "talented" kids should make blank books to *sell* as a fundraiser; the books would have more value as money-makers than as the lived-in experiences that they are. Though her perspective was truly an outlier of the opinions I encountered in the county, her comment is somewhat representative of the high school administration's total disconnection from the deep aesthetic value of the books for their

tenth grade students. These books, after all, are books that Melora, the tenth grade English teacher, says that students clutch to their chests as they walk through the hallways of their homes and schools "because they're their *whole souls."* Between the talk of Meg as professional teaching artist and individually talented students, teachers don't show up much in the conversation about what happens with art and the kids outside of caring for them deeply.

When teachers intimately involved in the process speak, however, they attribute to one another a different kind of authorship over students' books. Reflecting on another year of the book project completed, teachers referred to each others' students' books as "yours," as in, "You know, that project that you did in yours," or, "I really liked what you did with yours – tell us about it."

I asked the fourth grade teachers at Deyton how this fit into their curriculum. Gary had told me that he thought that the biggest asset of the books was the way in which it fit into the curriculum that teachers were trying to teach. So when I asked about how this fit into their curriculum, I was both surprised by the immediate response and curious about the ways in which the conversation immediately morphed to more idea-sharing concerning the books and the curriculum. In response to my question, "How does this fit with your curriculum?", the following conversation ensued:

> Rhonda: Perfect, really.
> Dana: Because I get to integrate my science with the social studies, and language arts with the social studies, and if I thought about it hard enough I could probably figure out ways to fit math in there, too.
> Rhonda: Well, we did some math – we did some mental math practice and they colored different squares – it wasn't a lot of math, but …
> Paula: … it turned into a picture of a lighthouse.
> Jesica: Did they then use it in their books?
> All: Uh huh.
> Jesica: Neat. Could you do that without the books?

Dana: Ehhh …
Jesica: Would there be ways of …
Dana: It wouldn't have a purpose to it, I don't think. (All are generally in agreement on this.)
Bette: And we had our social studies weekly, which I really liked.
Dana: I really liked those and I want them again…
Bette: Me too. But we could take them – it was a weekly newspaper type thing – and you could look and plan ahead if you had time to plan ahead.
Dana: Uh huh, uh huh.
Bette: And you could take that, and it had ---
Dana: A feature each week –
Bette: It could have been about history, or it could have been about animals –
Dana: They had an animal each week.
Rhonda: They had famous North Carolinians, too.
Bette: Each week, and then you could use your social studies book and pull all of that together, so you've got at least two resources that they could – learn about the Wright Brothers and do a whole page about that.
Dana: They could use the pictures to collage, and …
Rhonda: I had mine use those pictures as examples and then they drew their own.
Paula: Or they could do both.
Bette: But they could bring that all together.
Dana: And there were interviews, too.
Bette: But they could use that information to put in their books.
Dana: And even if they are cutting and pasting, they can make it into something interesting – something original, still, though.
Paula: I want to see yours, how they had things cut out and put in there. I liked yours, how they cut out a picture and then added their own stories. (Each of the teachers is referring to "yours" --- the "yours" meaning books that belong to students in each teacher's respective class.)
Bette: But it really does help you – the book – to bring it all together. And once they learn it, they can put it down and then remind themselves, you know.

Teachers referred to the books that her students made as "yours," acknowledging even in the language of choice the degree to which teachers shape students' experiences with the books. Earlier in the conversation, however, teachers referred to their *students* with the same kind of ownership. With reference to the books that students make, teachers both reference the tight structure of their classrooms and Meg's lessons, but easily articulate the ways which even *within* that structure, they are able to guide students through to unique and meaningful symbolic representations of their lives. Though the students make

these books, teachers' instruction, direction, and pedagogy made an indelible and identifiable mark on students' finished products – in a sense, teachers are the authors of the experiences students have while constructing and working through these book structures. Speaking of the tight structure of some of the lessons she teaches, Meg said to the Deyton fourth grade teachers:

> I've always been interested in how … when I have a chance to talk to kids about the differences between painting day and gluing day, and how I'm feeling a little apologetic about gluing day because it's all about following directions, pure and simple. But if I point that out to kids, they're completely unfazed. "But we get to *choose* how we do it!" They're so pleased that they get to make it the way they want to. They have no perception that there's structure – so much direction…

Without hesitation, Bette responded, "Oh, yeah, there's a lot of direction…" and before she could finish, Meg completed her thought:

> It's really interesting – if I step back five steps, I'm like, "Ah, the painting day – it's just *pure freedom*, practically." And the gluing days – it's pure directions, practically. And if you point that out to them, they're completely unfazed by it. They're like, "But we get to do it *the way we want*!" They love that. That ownership.

Students' *ownership* of these books resonated throughout conversations everywhere in the county – and showed up significantly in their proud discussions of their artwork with me and their peers. Outside of the section of conversation I just shared with you, however, very little discussion of teachers' "ownership" emerged. Even within the relatively disciplined and structured bookmaking lessons, Meg was able to cultivate learning environments in which students still understood themselves as agents and improvised within the structure. Rich and improvisatory ways of working are users' crafts, processes of working that abstract images of professional work cannot convey. When Eisenberg (1990/2007) writes of improvisation, he writes of "jamming" as a generative metaphor for organizing. Though jamming is potentially transcendent,

diversity-embracing, fragile, and risky, he argues, it also *requires* well-matched skills, settings separate from typical life, and surrender or readiness. Well-crafted organizations necessitate practiced skill *and* the freedom to use and apply skills in new ways; the combination of practiced skill *and* freedom to move generate possibilities for people to recognize, work on, and create problems in response to stimuli. A key question, I believe, is how we can imagine this kind of "user's craft" for teachers.

Moving away from an oppressive organization of teaching and learning toward one more open, contingent, or potentially liberating means leaving behind the known methods to achieve success and embracing the associative and potential-filled space of possibility. This move is a move toward the aesthetic. In the Mitchell County Schools, Meg is the embodiment of the aesthetic. In Meg's embodiment of the aesthetic, though, there exist all kinds of potentially threatening challenges to what it means to teach: namely, mistake-making, failure, and a kind of "cultivated ignorance" that opens up possibilities for surprise. Or, perhaps in her beautiful and improvisatory work, teachers imagine a shortage of expressive resources to carve out spaces and practices for themselves as artists.

Art's Potential

Art's potential lies in the reorganization of perception and experience to help us see our realities anew (Grumet, 1988), using the stuff of life extracted from life in order to present a dynamic image or experience (Langer, 1957). This reorganization of experience can be a hope-filled process. Though I am reminded of this hope-filled process in the classroom, I am reminded of it when I experience art. In late 2009 Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company's new piece about Abraham Lincoln, "Fondly Do We

Hope, Fervently Do We Pray," came to North Carolina. The piece is about Abraham Lincoln, yes, but also about history, the Civil War, race, gender, sexuality, Mary Todd, mental illness, hope, race, pain, oppression, and history's arc into the present and future. The performance utilized elements of less-and-never-told narratives with images and ways of moving and bodies to create a piece that left me, in the audience, short of breath, tears rolling down my face. Separate from the stuff of everyday life even while made from those elements, this piece presented something delimited in time and space from "the everyday." As art, it functioned to elevate each of the elements into something *whole* into which each element disappeared. In an actualization of what theater scholar Jill Dolan (2005) identifies as one of the greatest possibilities of live performance, the utopian performative, the disparate members of the audience seemed to disappear into a collective a bit more unified and prepared to go out into the world a bit different from how we entered. This utopian performative resonates with the ways in which Black Mountain College is talked about – a performance of artistic, educational, and democratic ideals that worked only because it disappeared.

As attracted as I am to the value of experience and the potential of the utopian performative in live performance, the lived-in realities of the day-to-day require more conversation than collective witness for any kind of lasting perceptual shift or change. Performance scholar Peggy Phelan (1993) taught us that an ontology of performance is one of disappearance, and that disappearance is where there political possibilities of performance lie. The ontology of performance is disappearance because, she writes, it consumes itself as it is happening, limiting all possibilities of reproduction. Performance decays *as it happens*. For Phelan, performance's decay-while-happening is what marks it

as non-reproductive. Instead, she argues, performance's disappearance is generative, associative, and aesthetic because in its decay it leaves behind little pieces that can be used to make something different and new (rather than leaving enough behind to reproduce the original form). The disappearances of our pedagogical performances in classrooms are part of what mark them as potentially generative, associative, and aesthetic. A non-reproductive, disappearing pedagogical performance in a classroom decays while it happens, leaving behind pieces for students to pick up and make their own performances rather than binding students to the ongoing reproduction of our original pedagogical act.

Standardized curricula, high-stakes testing, and strict adherence to particular teaching methods are all ways in which we as teachers and the organization of education, writ large, try to prevent the very disappearance and decay of knowledge. The paradox, of course, is that by attempting to *prevent disappearance*, we undermine the possibilities of those performative pedagogical performative encounters. Working in the wake of Phelan's performance theory, Dolan (2005) reaches for more tangible effects of performance when she theorizes the utopian performative. She believes that performance does not entirely disappear because, as it happens, it implicates those experiencing the performance through its virtuosity and dynamism of live performance. Her utopian performative is a way of articulating the ways in which performance leaves us with a different theory of sociality than the one with which we entered the auditorium. Dolan's utopian performative resists an ontology of *complete* disappearance in performance because it acknowledges the ways in which some art severs, or weakens, at the least,

some of the barriers we keep up to safely separate the stage from life, her elbows from my body, his life from my privilege.

The potential of aesthetic work often manifests when it wrests us from wherever we are, helping us to see our locations, practices, or outlooks as strange or less natural than we typically assume them to be. I think, though, that in order for those moments to really dig into our sides, they have to last longer than disappearance. In short, a performance that elevates us above the possibilities of the present and enables us to see the possibilities of tomorrow *is* a remarkably powerful tool – and yet a more sustained and inevitably more difficult negotiation of artistry and the trappings of everyday life becomes important if that re-imagining, re-working, and living-into work is to be crafted of the stuff of the everyday. When I introduce different theories of communication and sociality to my students, they often find that the theories threaten their deeply held beliefs about the world. As theory threatens them, they resist. I explain that theory's function is *as a tool* that can help us to see or experience our taken-for-granted worldviews "strangely." When emphasized as a tool to "make strange," theory becomes a way in which students can try on different and, often strange, ways of viewing the elements of their social and material worlds that seem totally natural. Like theory's function to "make strange," the utopian performative shows us ways in which our standpoints are implicated in processes we neither saw nor necessarily desired to see before.

From the framework of "disappearance," Meg's work in classrooms seems to operate differently from teachers' work in classrooms. Students' *bookmaking* work with Meg produces artifacts that resist the *total disappearance* of Meg's pedagogical performance in students' classrooms. Teachers work with the students in their books;

without teachers' guidance, students would probably only ever have empty books filled with blank pages. Meg cannot work with each of the students whom she teaches in her workshops the intimate process of working through curricula, their lives, and art to fill up the books' pages. Only teachers can do that. Still, students' books are the immediate product of their art-work with *Meg*, not their teachers.

Artist teachers can wrest us from *our* thresholds and offer a view back in the door from, perhaps, the standpoint of a neighbor of a different race, class, gender, or political bent. Artist teachers can help to bring us into relationship with the standpoints and experiences of others unlike us – those whom we may try to keep safely separate in the stages of our lives, the perimeters of our desks, the trajectories of our privileges. In the context of schooling, then, I argue that art's potential doesn't come from collective witnessing of some great play, dance, or music, though collective experiences of art are certainly important and can be very valuable. When teachers work artistically to move us from a collective enjoyment of a piece of art to an active engagement with those people next cramped into the desks next to us who we don't really want to touch or talk to - *that's* when things start to get tricky. The "art" objects produced in and through aesthetic are hardly the focus of Dewey's (1934/2005) work: in fact, he argues that to *begin* with art objects or the individualized "artist" misses the possibilities of aesthetic experience. In relationship to teachers and the work of teaching as art, Dewey's admonition is an important one.

The hallmarks of aesthetic experience are not masterful art objects or expertise in a particular process. Teaching as an art, then, is not about the production of perfect students or one's expertise in educing just the right things from a student. Dewey

(1934/2005) writes that the hallmarks of aesthetic experience are rhythm, integration, and attention to others, *not* the production of a nice-looking piece of art. Teaching, whether judged "successful" or "unsuccessful" by the often arbitrary standards of audit culture in schooling, can *still* possess these markers of aesthetic experience. A seemingly inchoate rhythm must have space to develop into its own dynamic organization, the kind of organization that Dewey insists forms all aesthetic experience over lengths of time. I was particularly struck by the prevalence of *rhythm* as Tamara explained the ways in which Meg (as an artist) has influenced her own teaching work in the classroom:

> Well, number one, she inspires me. Number two, the planets and the moon and the sun. Not the planets so much in third grade, but the moon and the sun. It's big and it's just a cycle - that's just hit me in the last few years – it's not just about the sun and the moon, it's about the cycle, the repetition. And yet it's full of movement, never the same, you know it's a cycle and yet the moon is going to be in different quadrants of the sky. And all the things that go with that, the human interaction with the moon and the things that go with that – the myths and legend. What do people think about it? And then you bring in poems, and it's a huge social studies thing – and writing, too. My students write moon myths, and about the moon and the stars, and …we read several from different cultures before that so that they get an idea. And we talk about people trying to explain the phenomena before technology, how they did that, and how it ties into our lives. Really, it's powerful.

As Grumet (1988) suggests, the art of teaching invites our attention to the boundaries and spaces of art and life; "for if teaching is an aesthetic experience, it is also a form of labor and an accommodation to bureaucracy" (p. 78). The easy categories in which we box "art" and "life" begin to dissolve when we frequently cross or ignore those arbitrary boundaries; their dissolution enables an inspection of the territories of "art" and "life" we imagine as categorically separate (Grumet, 1988). The cyclical nature of the moon and the sun, the cyclical nature of year after year of third grade students, and the cyclical nature of students' (and man's) relationship to the heavens, culture, and

knowledge all dynamically organize the experiences of Tamara and her students as they work through the process of building books and learning curricula. Structures of modern organizational life, particularly the structures that govern and segment time and experience in schools, often curtail these kinds of dynamic organization. The possibilities of teaching as an aesthetic practice within a school, though, are possibilities of integration of experience, relationships, and product that move beyond the here-and-now into something beyond the moment – precisely the hopes of the kinds of pedagogies Dewey advocates. These are the kinds of pedagogies *of organizing* Eisenberg (2007) characterizes as "ambiguous," the kinds of communication and symbolic practices that enable the co-creation of cultures:

> in which the boundaries between functions and levels are permeable; where employees are unafraid to speak up, even when they are less than certain; and where members develop the systemic awareness that promotes heedful interrelating and catches the precursors of adverse events before they cascade out of control. (p. 283)

To succeed in living into such an environment, individuals must let go of some of their tightly-clung autonomy and individualism and "hold on loosely to their beliefs and remain open to hearing disparate perspectives from others" (Eisenberg, 2007, p. 283).

The unimaginable things that happen in classrooms – the things that happen that require all of those hats that Brandon listed: "policeman, psychiatrist, fireman, or nurse" – are the inevitable contingencies and crises that Hyde (1998) reminds us *always* happen in culture. Cultures, in this case, range from the culture of a small classroom to the nation-state. Unimaginable and unplanned things happen, and those unexpected happenings can neither be anticipated nor controlled. Responses to contingency move along a spectrum of control and "happy genius" (Hyde, 1998). A threatened response to

contingency is to tighten control *to try to prevent it from occurring*. Razor-sharp precision, curtailed movement, and creative lockdown result in an attempt to prevent the conditions in which contingency may occur; contingency, of course, is impossible to prevent. An alternate response to contingency is met in the "happy genius" of a capacious – or artist's – mind. Of these two responses to contingency, Hyde not only values the latter, but suggests that we need to develop cultural, spiritual, and artistic styles that "allow some commerce with accident, and some acceptance of the changes contingency will always engender" (p. 107). Artistic work is boundary-work, work that does and can happen in classrooms. What kinds of contingencies and tensions emerge when artists' work and the organization of schooling *are the same thing*?

Teaching Natality

Artists negotiate the tenuous boundaries between the extraordinary and the everyday, submitting to the everyday in order to mine it fully for the bits of extraordinary. When Tamara speaks about connecting art with "any other kind of knowing" in the quotation I included in the last section, she emphasizes less the importance of art's existence than *what art does to and with us.* Artistic work makes a bridge of sorts between what we know and some "other knowing." It is through this boundary-crossing between the self or the once-was to something else, where experiences of learning happen. These experiences of learning do not just happen in schools and are not solely teacher-led. No, these experiences of learning are tricky and indeed, risky. Hannah Arendt (1958/1998) gives us a framework through which to understand this risk when she writes about the ways in which we emerge as agents, intractably connected to one another, only through speech and action with others. Linking our impulse to speech

and action to our condition of natality, or the condition of being born as a new possibility in the world, Arendt (1958/1998) responds that we respond to natality by "beginning something new on our own initiative" (p. 177) and that all new beginnings are marked by a "startling unexpectedness" (p. 178). The revelatory nature of speech and action are enacted in togetherness; disclosure of oneself through speech and action are risky endeavors, necessary and possible in true togetherness, where people are neither totally *for* you nor *against* you, but *with* you (Arendt, 1958/1998). This approach requires a particular kind of neutrality. Whether in the organization of experience or in the experience of organizing, however, rifts and contingencies are certain to occur. Organizational scholar Eric Eisenberg (2007) writes:

> If nothing else, experience teaches us that the twin goals of total clarity and complete openness are both chimerical and naive. Both are impossible to achieve, impossible to measure if they have been achieved, and often not even desirable. (p. 291)

The experience of schooling is disciplinary. Despite dicta about inspirational and caring, maternal teachers, Foucault (1984) and others have long told of us of the disciplinary nature of schooling. I am sure we could all cite examples of ways in which teachers and schools disciplined us. As a child of frequent moves, I frequently found myself in new classrooms, new schools, bored beyond imagination. My own refusal to feign interest several times landed me in the office of a well-meaning principal or guidance counselor for testing – surely, teachers thought, this fanciful and inattentive child struggled to learn. As my third-grade teacher bluntly told my mother, "This child shows *absolutely no signs of giftedness.*" Incisively pointing to both the identity threat and potential for generativity in this kind of knowledge-making, curriculum scholar Madeleine Grumet (1988) writes of this process as the *lies that daughters tell.* "In

showing us the world as they would have it," Grumet (1988) writes, "[our daughters] reveal the world that we have fled because we were not brave enough to pitch our tents and raise our flags there" (p. 162). The daughter who pushes a boundary or who claims that something *is* that *isn't* (from the insistence that the sky is purple to the possibility that she might be a pioneer woman and a feminist someday) reminds us of the ways in which we repudiated those very dreams and desires and alternate visions of reality; those *lies* about the world remind us of the ways in which we compromised our own desires and unconventionality.

In our response to those lies about the world as we know it, we can either punish those story-telling daughters to leave those dreams and to conform (because it is easier for us), or foster the middle-ground of learning where those stories become knowledge of realities we might work together to create (Grumet, 1988). Or, as Higgins (2005) writes: "Afraid to look at what is irrational, impoverished, and lifeless in our cultural inheritance, we fail to notice what might renew that inheritance, the natality of our students" (p. 460). Not only does the natality of our students renew that cultural inheritance; many of the elements of Meg's artist work with students revolve around ideas of natality – making new things from mistakes, failure, and surprise. Though these are also elements of teaching, as an artist, Meg has a greater freedom to *name* these elements of her artistic work in ways that teachers cannot. In the following sections, I spend work through some of these elements of Meg's work that characterize both Meg's work as an artist *and* teachers' work in the schools.

Mistake-Making, Failure, and Surprise

Learning as non-compliance, knowledge-in-the-making, and the capricious mind are all elements of artistic work that require loosened control. Hyde's (1998) crises and catastrophes that instigate response are beyond cultures' control; the hinge-points where Ellsworth (2005) locates real-live *learning* at monuments and in classrooms have to be open enough for students to experience both themselves and the world. One of the great rationales for arts integration in classrooms is that arts integration opens up middle grounds and third spaces – empty stages, blank CDs, new poster board – where students have space to make something new as they weave curriculum with artistic practices (Grumet, 1988; Rabkin & Richmond, 2004).

> Artists and writers seem to accept the emotional situation that there are no promises for what tomorrow brings and they are still willing to risk inspiration and confidence. To become what we have never seen is to wager our craft along with the obsessions that express, without qualification, a gigantic measure of our ignorance. Vulnerable to error and accidents and subject to radical indeterminacy, we wager our ignorance against "the subject supposed to know. (Britzman, 2009, p. 146)

Deborah Britzman actually looks toward *not knowing* as a hopeful and revelatory state (p. 148). Two of the mantras Meg repeats throughout her workshops are *I'm going to do something kind of surprising!* and *The great part about art is improvising around mistakes.* More than her abilities to make beautiful artwork, perhaps, these two phrases, representative of her pedagogical philosophy and approach, characterize Meg as an artist. These two weighty phrases also stand as direct contrasts between the way in which teaching work is organized.

Throughout Meg's work with students, she focuses on craftsmanship and the necessity for good materials and careful use of them, while *simultaneously* reminding

students that one of the most exciting parts about art is getting to innovate around mistakes and mishaps.

A dropped painting becomes an opportunity for students to experiment with colors that they would not have otherwise created, or to work with an image in the abstract when they'd been seeking to create a literal image or representation of something. I recall one instance when, after working meticulously to create an image of *The Nutcracker* – a ballet in which she danced each year – one high school student dropped her saturated painting as she carried it to the drying rack. She was crushed when it happened, fighting back tears at the tumultuous change-of-class period brought by the bell. When she showed her book to the class at the end of the construction phase and Meg's residency with her class, she had used that painting – ruined, she thought – for the back cover of her book. She noted that she had been devastated when she dropped her meticulously-painted painting and discovered that it bore a large smudge of smeared pink, light purple, and pastel green paint where once more defined colors and brushstrokes had been. Yet she found that she delighted in the smudge and the character that it gave her painting, as if it were dancing. Her happenstance smudge brought a sensation of movement, an integral component of dance which had been otherwise missing from the painting. She positioned the smudge so that it swept up from the bottom of her book's cover, almost as if the colors were leaping upward from the bottom of the page. They soared across the stage of the back of her book in sugarplum fairy colors. What had been a devastating wreck of worked-for perfection turned out to evoke an element key to the dance she so loved – grace and movement. She was delighted with the back cover of her book and surprised by how it came together.

A personal example of this: I made a painting with which I was especially pleased when I painted with the third grade students of Deyton teacher Barbara's class. That day, I had driven up to Penland through fog. The green that had burst forth between my early visit in March and my later visits in June had begun its fall-time retreat by the time I made this October trip up to the mountains; humidity clung to the air. With the fogginess that comes from altitude and humidity, everything was muted – the sunshine, the green, the twinges of color beginning to show up in the turning trees. It was still warm enough for goldenrod and purple flowers to dance in the sun-spotted fields at the lower elevations I passed through on my way between Dee's house and Conley Ridge. In the studio, we painted mornings. After Meg invoked images of morning and worshipping the morning through Mary Oliver's arm-stretch worthy "Why I Rise Early," I wanted to paint *my* morning. I selected a golden piece of paper, the color of the goldenrod I had passed on the drive I that morning, and covered the paper in white paint. It was a simple painting, really – a barely-there outline of a sun high in the sky but muted, a huge sky in comparison to yellow and green and golden and brown hills stretched at the bottom, rising barely into the foreground. I was particularly pleased with the feeling of the painting – I had become more confident in moving my brush and hands over the paper and through the paint during the few months I had been visiting Meg and painting alongside students, a confidence that breeds comfort with simplicity, mutedness, and minimalism. Many of my earlier paintings were overworked. In this one, the brushstrokes were still visible, evoking the image of the movement of light across the morning.

A challenge arose once we started to work on book-covering, however – as the students and I took our large paintings and were faced with the decision of selecting part

of the painting to place on the much-smaller book board pieces that would become our covers, I discovered that there was no way that I could position the book board to incorporate both the sun and hills in my cherished painting. Sadly, I chose my brushstroke hills, removing the top portion of the painting. Though Meg had been reminding students throughout that "the best part about art is improvising around trouble spots," I had not yet done it.

I sliced off the top of my painting and began tearing around the sun that I was so proud of – I collaged it on top of the much-smaller book cover I had created. I reserved the scraps of "sky" and nestled that cool morning sun in a collaged collection of monochromatic clouds. I selected white duct tape to bind the cover of the book to the middle-and-back sections. Though it was not what I had imagined, it was still the painting with which I had been pleased – only better. My original painting was more realistic than the cover, perhaps; in it, there was a great deal of distance between the muted sun and the image of the hills below. On my re-arranged cover, the sun is superimposed very close to the earth, nestled in clouds that were not a part of the original painting. The re-arrangement is more *surprising*, because a giant sun almost touches the earth in ways I would not have otherwise painted. The collaged clouds add texture to the sky that I did not achieve with my paintbrush. Somehow, it seems to better objectify my own experience of feeling both an extended and foreshortened horizon while in the mountains of Mitchell County. Despite the reticence to "destroy" my painting I felt when Meg encouraged me to take this risk, I ended up with a product that was surprising to me, and more pleasing than the original. Experiencing this, I learned differently the

sometimes unsettling pieces of working artistically and the emotional investment and insecurity in working with this artistic process.

Failure and forgiveness.

The relationship between craftsmanship and process and attention to detail *with* mistakes and improvisation is one resonant of a relationship between action and forgiveness. Arendt (1958/1998) writes that, in order to continue to act in the world, we must have promises and forgiveness. Forgiveness releases us from the damning irreversibility of our actions, without which we would be linked to the one deed from which we could never recover; promises remedies the sheer unpredictability of the future (our ability to make and keep them). This kind of artistic forgiveness is so deeply *unlike* the organizational environment in which many teachers find themselves. Even if the local environment is able to forgive, schooling writ large is certainly not a forgiving enterpirse for teachers. This intractability manifests in an emphasis on standardized curricula and methods, as discussed in a previous section, but also, I think, in a disavowal of trying things *one is not good at*.

The significance of teachers *not* participating alongside students in art-making is, perhaps, best illustrated by tenth grade English teacher Melora's willingness *to* make books alongside her students. I evasively mentioned to Tamara that one of the teachers whom I'd encountered made books with her students each year and did not hesitate to discuss her artwork with her students. It's a small county; Tamara immediately knew who I was talking about.

> Jesica: She had brought a couple of her books and was willing to talk about, "Oh, so this was this period in my life and that's …"
> Tamara: "probably why I felt this way…"

Jesica: Yeah, "That's probably why there are a bunch of swirls in this book, or lots of flowers in this books, or …"
Tamara: "or jagged edges of death in this one."
Jesica: (Both chuckling). Yeah. And her willingness to both engage in the sustained process and …
Tamara: Making and talking about it, moves students along. And I must say that I know another student who, probably based on her willingness to share and to keep making one every year, has continued to make a book each year. So it's kind of cool to see that, in this instance, it's gone beyond that year – that class, for that student. It can be really good. It's a lot of effort, especially if you're doing it year after year, even just for herself. That's great.
Jesica: I don't think I even started to get what "living in the book" meant until I started really working on my own. I've been writing and drawing as I've been working and …
Tamara: Yeah. And you *do* have to live it. And that's one of the things that Meg and I have been talking about. The teachers, I think, who have never done it – and the reason that they haven't – they really need to do it ahead of time and live into it so that they can do it in their classes. But they have to do it ahead of time so that they're ready. So that they know what it feels like.
Jesica: Especially, I imagine, for someone who doesn't feel – who hasn't ever participated in something artistic at all.
Tamara: Right. Especially – in all of it – certainly the emotional investment that comes with the tenth grade project, with the interviewing. I mean, that's a lot … and then, the daily, nightly dedication to writing in the 3rd grade. It's a lot. And then variety. Keeping the variety interesting for the folks who are going to read it. Being true to your observations, you know, with the weather and the temperature, but also be willing to be explore different genres and drawings. And then the researching in the fourth grade. They all have something that's really, that takes a lot of dedication and is difficult to do. But the teachers have to do it first. How can you lead it and share with them if you're not going to do it yourself?

This duality – forgiveness to allow freedom from action's irreversibility and promises to allow freedom from action's unpredictability – resonates with the co-existence of structure and agency (Giddens, 1984). For sociologist Antony Giddens (1984), these two things are bound in relationship to one another, in which structures are consistently established by the action and the ability to act. From an Arendtian perspective, action's irreversibility and unpredictability (two of the troubling features of action that make it risky for us) exist as structure – and our human ability to forgive and to make promises enable us to continue acting though action writes itself on us.

Forgiveness and promises both require a sense of connection to others and to one's own self and relationships in the past and in the future, as well as imagination and a faith that almost creates or permits the freedom to gift oneself with the possibility of a future differently imagined. Both forgiveness and promises depend on "the presence and acting of others, for one can forgive himself and no one can feel bound by a promise made only to himself; forgiving and promising enacted in solitude or isolation remain without reality and can signify no more than a role played before one's self" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 237). The promise or possibilities of mistake-making *in the classroom* or with others in a workshop space can be celebrated in Meg's work because the mistakes happen in the context of the ability to forgive, act, and move forward. The problem with making mistakes, though, is that mistakes are normally associated with failure. Craft and cultural scholar Richard Sennett (2008) writes that experiential, hands-on learning, can be *rife* with failure … and because of that failure, hands-on, aesthetic processes of teaching and learning can be experienced as quite cruel.

> Daring to fail evinces a certain strength; one is willing to test why things don't or do work out, reckon limits on skill one can do nothing about. In this light, learning by doing, so comforting a nostrum in progressive education, may in fact be a recipe for cruelty. The craftsman's workshop is indeed a cruel school if it activates our sense of inadequacy. (Sennett, 2008, pp. 96-97)

I asked Tamara if she found it difficult to make art with her students, after she said that she wasn't very good at it. She insisted that it wasn't. I asked if she thought it was difficult for other teachers; she shrugged.

> I guess so. It must be [challenging to try something new], for some. Because I know some teachers who won't *do* because they're embarrassed or afraid that it won't be great. But that's okay; the kids appreciate the effort. So it wasn't great. Keep trying. Just the fact that you did it has value. I'm a terrible singer but I sing every kid "Happy Birthday" and it hurts your ears, off key – but they don't care. They want to see … they want their happy birthday song.

For students engaged in processes of learning, mistakes are frustrating and, sometimes, fear-inducing. Students' work is ultimately graded by their teachers, against a rubric. I asked Brandon, Jennifer's fourth grade teaching counterpart at Gouge, if he thought that students found it difficult to try something that they didn't feel "good at." Without hesitation, he replied, "Yes. Absolutely." He continued:

> And I – I feel like there were several who were very hesitant to make the first line, or the first mark. How am I gonna make a mountain or whatever, to make it look good? Because you saw, you see the ones that are on the wall and are like, "Uhhh, I don't think I'm gonna be doing anything that looks like that!" But yes, I definitely do. And I feel like there were some who were probably just courageous, and they were gonna jump in there and start puttin' something down on paper regardless of what happened, you know?

Practicing admiration.

Acknowledging the challenge of making art, Meg consistently asks students to articulate elements of their own and others' work that they admire. By providing this opportunity for student to narrate their mistakes *into a larger story structure* around their work, Meg's questions bring students' mistakes into relationship with an ever-evolving image of an ideal (the perfect painting), the symbolic (the meaning of a painting), and their own relationships between those two realms. So, while there are clear expectations for craftsmanship and following directions, students' freedom to narrate each element of their artwork and book into a larger whole establishes a scenario in which a mistake is not definitive, but rather a perhaps fortuitous instance otherwise impossible. The space in which students work between craftsmanship and mistakes could be called a "transitional space," which Ellsworth (2005) describes as an "environment of interrelation" (p. 32) where there are possibilities for acting upon the world while being acted upon.

This duality between acting upon the world (making mistakes, improvising around them) and being acted upon (following directions, executing craftsmanship carefully) opens up a space where learning and knowledge-making can happen. Listening to the ballet dancer's explanation of why she decided to feature the smudge on her "ruined" painting on the back cover of her book revealed ways in which she was thinking about movement – movement in dance, yes, but also temporal movement through her lifetime and social movement through her family and community and social position.

> Transitional space does not appear spontaneously or simply because we will it to, but it does exist always and everywhere as potential. Whether it is in fact actualized, whether it is "spring" into a materiality, depends, in part, on how an environment holds stabilizing dynamic such as habit, foundations, and an already-achieved "knowledge" with *flexibility*. A flexible, responsive holding environment meets the self-in-transition with curiosity and playfulness, and the good-enough holding environment is open to itself being changed in turn – as the result of having been in relation with a learning in the making. (Ellsworth, 2005, pp. 32-33)

Students' positions in their classrooms *as learners* are so firmly rooted in Meg's process of teaching bookmaking that so long as she and their classroom teacher encourage a student that mistake making is part of the learning process, students typically respond relatively well to the encouragement and incorporate whatever's happened into the bigger book project. So, while there is one prescribed way that Meg asks students to make certain elements of their books, she also equips them with the rationale for the instructions she is asking them to follow *and* provides them with the knowledge and materials necessary to deviate from those instructions.

Interestingly, Meg's emphasis on admiration rather than "method" or "intentionality" garners a different relationship to the power of *doing something well* than we might typically see. The following passage is worth quoting at length, for in it Grumet

(1988) deals with the relationship between latent transference, power, and our desires to have the mechanisms by which our teachers, those mystical all-knowing figures, *came to know* what they do:

> We expect [our teachers] to know and, in that knowing, to confer knowledge and power on us. When we ask for their method we are struggling to wriggle out of the transference, our dependence on them, at the very time that we perpetuate that dependence as we assume that they "know." In effect we are asking for the links that form the chain of their intentionality without wondering or worrying whether we want to put this particular chain around our necks. (p. 122)

Contrary to the need for method that we need from our teachers, these moments of "admiration" which Meg facilitates among her students emphasize, more often than not, the kinds of happy accidents that occurred in the process of students' art-making. As she moves away from the bonds of method and emphasizes students' capricious responses to mistakes and mishaps that cropped up in the journey of their art-working, Meg undoes any standard method by which teachers might be able to emulate her artistic practice. While I wholly believe Meg means this act to be liberatory, opening up possibilities for chance and delight, psychically, I think the refusal of method presents a difficult challenge to teachers situated in the audit culture of the schools.

Being surprised, creating chance, and setting oneself up for delight are part of the artists' work. These characteristics of artists' work stand in such contrast to the work of the school and the work that is typically permitted by schooling. I am not sure that there is much space for delight in the school as it now exists; surprise is certainly a rare luxury in the high school. On one of the mornings I visited Melora during her early morning planning period, a student wandered into the classroom, sat down, and struck up a conversation with me. He showed me his book; I asked him if he would mind showing me a page with which he was particularly pleased. He showed me pictures of him and his

dad, and a poem he had written for his dad. After the student left, Melora expressed surprise at his openness, quite uncharacteristic for this student, but furthermore, generally precluded by the local culture's emphasis on masculinity and closedness.

> And see, that's another thing with these guys, and a lot of their families, you don't show [any emotion]. I mean, I've noticed that, because my family's just like that. It's the way we were raised, you know. And a lot of people from where, around here, they're sort of hardened because they're just workers. Get out and work and you do your chores and do what you're supposed to and all of that, and the whole emotional thing …… it's like, "Yeah, I care, but keep ya distance." And that whole barrier just crumbled for him. Because that's the way he was. He was, "Everybody better *keep their distance*."

Melora's Avery County accent poured through her first "keep ya distance;" it was clear that not only are these themes relevant in her student's lives; they were themes of her own life and experience as well. Through the books, students had found ways of making symbolic objects out of their subjective experiences in the world in ways that both linked to memory *and* value for others' recognition. In the section that follows, I will share three particularly meaningful student experiences with this process of working symbolically as artists in their books. In the midst of these stories, which are Melora's observations of her students, I include pieces students' evaluations of the projects in their own words. For each iteration of Meg's project, the Teaching Artist Initiative collects data from students and teachers regarding different relational and artistic capacities students engage throughout the process. Among the Teaching Artist Initiative staff there exists a real suspicion of the quantitative possibilities of this data, despite the numbers' general support of the work that they do, and the persuasiveness of numbers when used by Penland's Development office to write grants to fund the program. For the most part, they use the qualitative responses to advocate for the program. The data I intersperse in the next section are high school students' responses to the same projects of which Melora

speaks, though from a different semester. Only one of thirty-one responses commented neutrally about the experience, claiming to "have learned nothing" and to have "gained nothing but a book that I now have to write in."

Crafting experience.

The first story of crafting surprise – or learning to be surprised by experience – is a piece of a conversation that Melora and I had regarding the student who had poked his head into her classroom, cordially showing me those pictures and poetry. Apparently, this student had started to make a habit of coming into her room since he started to get excited about the book project. Most mornings, he brought with him small pieces of memorabilia.

> Melora: And what he brought in – he brought in that little bulletin, was from the church, Grassy Creek Church, and it had his birth announcement in it. And his daddy had that. He brought that in as one of his artifacts. And he was like, "Look! I'm in there!" And I said, "Yeah. Paul, I actually remember when you were born. I said, "Because you were a huge baby – it went around the neighborhood!"
> Jesica: (Laughing with Melora).
> Melora: He was what, eleven pounds?
> Jesica: Oh my gosh. His poor mom.
> Melora: Yeah! I know! And I, we, you see – my ex-husband and I used to know his mother, and his dad, back when we were younger. And I remember when she had Paul, because I thought, "Wow … I … can't believe that." I had just had my daughter and she was eight pounds, three ounces, and everyone was like ….
> Jesica: She was a big baby.
> Melora: Yeah, because I thought, "Wow, she's a beast!" (Laughing.) And everyone was all, "No! Paul was *eleven pounds*!" And see I've told him that, and he was like, "*You remember me?*" And I said, "Yeah, Paul …" And I told him, "Paul, you were an *oddity* at that time!"
> (Both laughing pretty heartily).
> Melora: And he's like, "Thanks a lot. *Thanks a lot*." But yeah, I said: "People *remember things*, Paul." He just – it never crossed his mind about keeping memories, or keeping anything of the past. He just let it go. So this has opened up a whole new part of him that he never knew about.
> Jesica: And it's the only thing he completed.
> Melora: Yeah. He did. It's the *only* thing he completed this year. And he *told* you that!
> Jesica: Yeah, he did.

> Melora: He was just like, "Ask me how much I did in this class." And that book – that book is what will pass him. Because no, he didn't do hardly anything, but what he did in that book shows that he knows what's going on. And …
> Jesica: Well, it's clear that he can write, and …
> Melora: Oh yeah.
> Jesica: from everything that he did in there.
> Melora: Oh yeah. He's a good kid. Deep down. Deep … *deep* down, he's a good kid. (Laughing as she says this, emphasizing the "depth" of his goodness, but with a clear enjoyment of and affinity for this student.)
> Jesica: (Laughing). Maybe this project helped shave off a few of those layers.
> Melora: It did, it did! I think it did.

In their evaluations of the project, students comment on being surprised and sharing memories emotion, as well. One student wrote:

> Making a book was tough in a lot of ways. There were many times when I felt overwhelmed by it; but pouring pieces of your family and yourself into a book really made it worth it. Memories tend to fade over time, but this is a simple way to keep them alive. I've enjoyed making the book, but I'll really enjoy filling the pages with memories and the things that make me who I am.

While another commented on the undiscussed "sentimental side" of being a high school student:

> I think this project is something we will cherish for a long time. As teenagers we don't express our sentimental side often but this gave us the chance to do so. I liked learning all the different techniques and applying them to my book. I know I will use them later, too. I enjoyed being able to be completely creative and making the book on our own. I like the freedom we got. I'm excited to see the finished product.

The next two short stories deal with the kinds of perspective-taking and surprise that come from others' interactions with students' artwork, after they've made objects of their experiences. Melora's daughter was in her tenth grade English class; her daughter would not show Melora her book until Melora finally had to grade it. Though Melora enjoyed learning more and more about students' lives through their books, and frequently told parents, "If you can get a hold of that book … look at it," she was unprepared for the experience she would have when finally reading her own daughter's book.

> The book, it's *her*. And that's what I wanted it to be – a lot of parents get caught up in thinking that it has to be about the parents, and the family. But I wanted it to be the student. And, "Yeah, I *come* from this family, but this is what I am *because* of my background." And that's what I wanted them to see. You know, she wrote a lot about her brother. And things *they* had done together. And reading it … it was hard to grade hers, because I am her teacher but I'm her *mom,* you know (both chuckling), and a lot of this stuff when I read it … you know, you never think of your kids viewpoint … you just think, "Oh, I enjoyed this, therefore …"I love these family outings, therefore you do too!" And it's … the person – one of the topics was, "A person I have a special relationship with in my family." She wrote about my dad. And I never thought the two of them had anything. And she wrote about little things, "We would always go fill up buckets of blueberries, walk to the river…" and he would make her a blueberry cobbler. I *vaguely* remember that, but … but she does. Yeah. Then, you know, "He always sits in his recliner and watches the news." And see, I always just thought she was over there playing around. But to *her,* that was her perspective. And that's another thing, the kids – hopefully the parents, when they read it, will go, "*Man*, I never realized." And so now, I try to make it a point to try to get her up there to see him more. Because as she's getting older she's getting away from wanting to see *any* of us because she's got her *own* life …I would have *never* thought he'd have been the one she wrote about. But those are just a few of the key things she remembers about him. And *she* found this photograph; *she* had it! Yeah! She had it. And again, my dad's just one of those people – you keep your distance. He's smiling and he's hugging her, which is something I've never seen him do in any other picture with anybody. So that's something …

Through the book – her daughter's work as an artist, Melora was able to see her daughter and *her daughter's experience* from a different perspective than she had previously been able to take. Melora tried to have a family night at the school, because she thinks that sharing these books bring up emotions and personal connections typically undiscussed in many families. The high school administration, however, refused to give her any space to hold any kind of event. The auditorium mysteriously booked up with play rehearsals and cheerleading practice. Melora hopes to have some kind of event in her own classroom in upcoming years.

Students commented on this surprising feature of discovery, as well. One student wrote:

> I think I learned two main things. I learned that anyone can create art, and I learned more about my classmates' pasts. Before we did this project, I thought painting was for the art students at Penland. After seeing the beauty in my classmates' work, I had to rethink this assessment. It also amazed me to learn new things about friends I have known for years. It just goes to show that there is always something more under the surface.

This student's comment resonates with Meg's emphasis on finding creative ways to improvise around mistakes and craftsmanship's relationship to cherishing special objects:

> This project has been an interesting experience for me. I don't consider myself very good at art or very creative, but I have enjoyed the book making anyway. Though I am not very happy with certain aspects of my book, I will now have to find creative ways to fix it. During this project I have learned how to use tools I had never seen before, and also got better with the tools I was already familiar with. While looking for pictures that reminded me of times I had forgotten about. Despite being unhappy with some of my book, I think making it has been a very good experience.

Melora's account of her Hispanic students' experience with the books serves a final, powerful example of the significance of students' artistic work to use symbolic forms to represent their experiences:

> And my Hispanic students – I have several this semester – really enjoy doing this. Because they never get the opportunity to talk about their families, because of all the biases around here and the prejudice and all that. And this is a way for them to just, "This is my family." … And again, in this area, all you hear is how *bad* the Hispanics are. Because, "Those Mexicans …" and, "They need to go back to Mexico…" and all this, and the kids here … some of the kids *here* are cruel to them. But you know that, last semester... you could just see her beaming. While she, *she* was up there in front of the class teaching *them* something about *her* heritage that had been put down and horrible things said to her because of where she was from, there she was *teaching* these American kids. She brought a video of her quinceñera, and we started to watch some of it. We did … and the bell rang, and everyone was like, "Can we watch the rest of this tomorrow?" And she was thrilled. And I allow them to put some of their stuff in Spanish. Because that's part of … they ask if it will count off if they put some things in Spanish and I'm like, "No…" because a lot of their letters, especially from their older family members … are in Spanish. Because they don't know …

We spoke a little more, and she concluded her thoughts:

> So this is really good for them. And like you say, it is *safe*. It's a safe place where they can get up and say, "This is my heritage. This is where I'm from. I'm proud

> of it." You know, and no one criticizes them. And the kids ask question: "What is this?" and "Why do you say that?" It gives them some ownership of their lives.

A student's response to the evaluation survey also speaks powerfully to the theme of Melora's example – the significance of having ways, in school, of making subjective experience objective through artistic choices. The following response is a powerful example of the ways in which, through these books, students' lives become sources for learning and meaning-making often written out of the organization of schooling.

> What I learned while doing this project is that sometimes it's okay to have no clue and no idea. I went into this without the slightest thought on what to do. I immediately began to think of colors. From a bright cheery rainbow, to the soft, deep hues of fall. Ashen greys and deep purples, soft greens and absolute blacks; I had so many possibilities in front of me that I was overwhelmed. I began to get down to the basics. I painted a rainbow that blended the way a family should blend together. I used lighter colors and made it soft and light. But the real family I live in is nothing like that. It's just our "cover" of sorts. So my other paintings had lines, like the ties that divide us, and circles that disrupted the flow of the colors. Not very noticeable or dramatic to the naked eye, yet telling the unknown and unspoken story of my family. I've grown up, changed, and transitioned because of the "happenings" in my life. However, I cannot bring myself to regret this – it has made me who I am today. Strong, independent, hard-headed and stubborn, wise beyond my years, and weathered with years of experience. I have learned that I am very grateful to my family for making me who I am today. If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be ready for the real world yet.

Throughout these examples, both observed by Melora and based in students' own words, ownership emerges as an incredibly important theme in this process, opening up a space of personal connection and emotional life so often organized out of studetns' and teachers' experiences of teaching.

Melora is the only teacher whom I met in the district who makes personally-revealing books alongside her students, as Tamara and I discussed (and I shared with you through a piece of that conversation). Arts education specialist Gail Burnaford (2003) marks artists' ability to "be personal" with students as a freedom that teachers do not often enjoy:

> Artists are often called by their first names in classrooms - not like the teachers who rarely are permitted to be that familiar with their students. Artists change the pace; they move the furniture, they make messes; they make noise. And then they leave. (p. 169)

Meg is *Meg* in classrooms throughout the district, just as Adrienne the intern was *Adrienne* and I was simply *Jes*. We had permission to enter classrooms with a surprising kind of personal connection to teachers and students; and then we left. As I discuss in the final chapter of this project, this temporal distinction between teachers' work with students and Meg's work with students is a significant one.

Making surprises.

When Meg works with students, she announces, "And now, I'm going to do something kind of surprising!" This happens at several points throughout her process – when she gives the paper a bath, when she uses her fingers to paint trees, and when she, at the end of the high school painting sessions, requires students to quickly whip through "clean up paintings" where they allow their bodies to experience the paint kinesthetically. This became one of my own mantras throughout this year, which I took into the bookmaking workshop that I taught in Durham. Art making, I think, is perpetually surprising. Like Hyde's (1998) "happy genius" response to contingency and catastrophe, Meg's emphasis on the "surprising parts of art" highlights an artists' shape-shifting, knowledge-making process, often upsetting the typical order of things in classrooms. Deyton's fourth grade teachers contrasted their "artist days" in the classroom to their typical days:

> Bette: It's Louder. Messier. But they *love* it. *They love it*. And it is good.
> Jesica: What do you think they love about it?
> Bette: Well, they get to paint. Mixing the colors. Freedom. Getting to - you sort of have an idea that you talk about and then they can branch off here or there. They're dictating what their books will look like – they love that.

Paula: It's loud. And a lot of time they get to work together. More than they ever do with math or reading, and they get to be more in control of what they're doing.
Jesica: There still seems to be a structure to that, as well.
Jennifer: Ooooh, yeah.
Bette: Yeah, we're pretty structured (almost apologetically), even if we're just letting them work – if the paints are out or whatever.
Dana: (Sarcastically, but full of love.) So they'll keep a lid on it.
Bette: Yeah, (chuckling) that's right.

Before paste-painting days with the elementary students, Meg fills paint trays with nine vibrant colors of paste paint. This limit on both color and quantity of paint works well with the elementary students, who, in Meg's experience, often struggle to decide which colors to use when presented with too many options. Meg offers more paint options to the high school students, filling several dozen 6 and 8 oz. yogurt cups with various colors of paste-paint, ranging from mundane primary and secondary colors to exciting and complicated jewel tones and metallics. Students share the paint, using the tables as their palettes. When they work on a painting, they use spoons to scoop paint from the yogurt cups directly onto their tables-come-paint-palettes. Typically, students over-estimate the amount of paint they will need, leaving them with far more paint on their tables than they can use for their paintings. The paint, often mixed together, cannot be salvaged.

Explaining her motive as "avoiding waste," Meg has instituted the practice of "clean up paintings" at the end of each of the high schoolers' painting periods. When about five minutes remain in a painting lesson, Meg warns, "Clean up paint!" Students grab paper and their meticulousness flies out the window. They work to create as many paintings as possible in that very limited period of time so that they *use* all of the paint they have scooped out onto their desks. This serves a few purposes: if they use the paint, they have less clean-up work to do, they create ample paintings that they can use in their

books, and – most importantly, they work kinesthetically with the paint and paper. Students seem to experience these clean-up paintings in direct opposition to their planned paintings (painted from images they bring in – snapshots sealed safely in plastic baggies) – and students often end up selecting these clean-up paintings for their covers, or as their favorite pages.

Some of my own favorite paintings are clean-up paintings. I had selected the paint I used for these clean-up paintings fastidiously, spooning paint from yogurt cups onto the table where I worked alongside students so that I could get the image "just right." Some of those planned paintings turned out just fine – I worked on several of them until I was pleased. The clean-up paintings, however, combine color and movement into something simultaneously more simple and more complex. Clean-up paintings capitalize on the surprising elements of what happens when we learn how to think with our hands and the colors, letting the paint determine where it should go on the page. Literally, I know, my hands moved the paint across the pages I painted. Thinking of the experience of clean-up painting, though, I cannot shake the feeling that the paint somehow used my hands as a vehicle to wind up where it wanted. The element of surprise that accompanied the clean-up paint – the ample resources of paint combined with the limited resource of time and an ever-encroaching bell – fostered the conditions for students (and me!) to respond kinetically and fluidly to the paint and the paper. Kinesthetic response is one of the six viewpoints that dancer and choreographer Mary Overlie names as the language of movement, dance, and theatre on the stage (Bogart & Landau, 2005). Theater directors Anne Bogart and Tina Landau (2005) used Overlie's viewpoints and developed them into ways for actors and directors to think about movement and staging. Kinesthetic response

has always interested me the most, because it articulates the ways in which people kinesthetically and non-cognitively respond to their built environments. Kinesthetic response, I believe, is what helps a dance to seem "alive," to move, as if it is an ongoing improvisation despite the choreography. Many elements of Meg's workshops feel improvisatory and alive, movement-filled, despite the careful choreography. Clean-up paintings display a nice example of this tension. The imposing stimuli of quickly disappearing time and an excess of paint selected in the service of a pre-meditated image create the circumstances in which students must work quickly, kinesthetically, and almost non-cognitively.

As an artist, Meg insists that students curiously explore the world around them in order to be *surprised* by what they find. She fosters this kind of surprise by asking them to find and count pieces of public art, but mostly by reminding them to pay close attention to the world around them. The things that you notice, you can ask questions about. On the simplest of levels, Meg tries to bring some of the surprise of Penland into teachers' classrooms in schools through her lessons. During the lesson on graphic design – the day she turns the books over to the teachers – Meg brings several dozen images of Penland for students to see again as they work on their Penland pages of their books in class. As Meg sets up her supplies, she puts the construction-paper-mounted images face-down. She asks each student to "be surprised" as he or she flips over each image, and to be mindful of placing it back face-down so that the next student can have the same pleasure of discovering something surprising.

As a teacher, Meg insists that students *work hard* to pay close attention to steps and directions so that they make structurally sound books. Or perhaps it is *as a teacher*

that Meg insists on students' creeping curiosity, while *as an artist* she insists that students honor their materials – materials for constructing their books and materials for illustrating and filling their books' stories – through careful attention to craftsmanship and making beautiful objects. Meg often asks the question, "Are you pleased?" to students and teachers and to me, about the work that we're doing. Rather than commenting on a piece's beauty or level of execution or technical mastery, Meg focuses her attention on craftsmanship (how well is it made?) and pleasure – the pleasure that one derives from his or her work. This emphasis, as part of Meg's work, stands in such stark contrast to the working conditions of the Mitchell County Schools, and even with Meg's own organizational work life at Penland. There is a distinctly aesthetic element to pleasure and to surprise. When Meg talks about craftsmanship and its associated pleasure (which are almost always linked, in her discussion and question asking about both), a long term relationship or decision-making process is part of the equation.

Meg had criteria for the cover of the book – her requirement was that it fulfilled a certain set of craftsmanship standards, which she related to its functionality as a cover of a book. The paper needed to hang at least an inch around every edge of the book board, glue needed to be universally distributed across the book board, and pressure with the bone folder would help to remove air and glue bubbles that could weaken the book cover's structure by damaging the paper (saturating it) or preventing a thorough bond with the book board. Within those parameters of structural integrity, however, students had full creative freedom. That could mean collaging paste paint together in order to fulfill those structural requirements, collaging parts of their paintings on top of sections they attached to the book board, or even adding additional pieces of paste paint to "patch"

holes ripped in paste-paper in the painting or drying processes. Even though there were structural requirements, there were also a number of ways that mistakes and mishaps could have been improvised around.

Making mistakes.

Sennett (2008) links the willingness to make mistakes to one's own pleasure and growth in artwork. He writes:

> In turn, by making something happen more than once, we have an object to ponder; variations in that conjuring act permit exploration of sameness and difference; practicing becomes a narrative rather than mere digital repetition; hard-won movement become ever more deeply ingrained in the body; the player inches forward to greater skill. In the taped state, by contrast, musical practice becomes boring, the same thing repeated over and over. Here handwork, not surprisingly, tends to degrade. (Sennett, 2008, p. 160)

Developing an ability to make mistakes, diminishing the fear of error, is necessary for a performer, in particular. Mistakes will happen, and when in relationship with others (or on stage), one cannot freeze at the note; one must learn how to "go on" from the instance of the mistake. Sennett (2008) claims that this ability to "go on" is not a personality trait, but rather a learned skill. In Meg's teaching work, it is practiced. Mistake-making and the willingness to be surprised both require, I believe, an embrace of imagination and a suspension of ego. Only through this kind of rich and associative imagination does Deborah Britzman (2009), through Lacan (1998), locate possibilities for hope in education. Following Lacan's view that only through doubting our existence can we begin to exercise imagination (by trying to anticipate what has not yet happened), Britzman (2009) finds within the constraints of impossibility the hope for creativity, psychic survival, and the production of grace. Similar, indeed, to this discussion of mistakes and imagination is the way in which Stanley Deetz (1992) describes the

purposes and possibilities of communication. Communication, as he describes it, is self *destructive*, not self-expressive:

> The point of communication as a social act is to overcome one's fixed subjectivity, one's conceptions, one's strategies, to be opened to the inderminancy of people and the external environment. Communication in its democratic form is productive rather than reproductive. It produces what self and other can experience, rather than reproduces what either has. (p. 341)

I think that this requires giving oneself away, working in the disinterested faith of a an artist's gift economy (Hyde, 1983) or a pedagogy of revolution (Freire, 2000) rather than in the interested direction of banking economies of commerce and education (Freire, 2000; Hyde, 1983).

Courage, or risk, is something that we assume is seamlessly banded to our notion of "hero," particularly the heroic "savior" teacher who fills our educational imaginations these days (Taubman, 2009). Arendt, though, notes that courage is not much more than the "willingness to act and speak at all, to insert one's self into the world and begin a story of one's own" (p. 185). The willingness to show oneself at all, which would be impossible without speech and action, is an act of courage perhaps greater if the person is fearful or acutely sensitive to those around her. When we think of artists, broadly, they tend to occupy a peripheral space at the edges of organization and action, and yet – courage comes from putting one's own story out in the world to bump into the stories of others. In other words, courage comes from the willingness, or the risk, of acting in concert with others. No courageous speech or action can occur without the presence of others.

This dialectic between "act" and "acted upon" fosters a kind of relationship between an agent and structure, or the ways in which someone *ought* to act or to go about

the daily course of work. Paying deep attention to the lines between the extraordinary and the everyday, the act of paying close attention – with one's hands, eyes, ears, nose, heart, and instinct – marks an important facet of working artistically. This process, of paying deep and close attention, is one that requires a great deal of accounting for one's place in a particular place and time. This kind of "wide awakeness," for Higgins (2005) and the Albers (Duberman, 1972) is the aesthetic possibility of paying keen attention to the stuff of experience from which art arises, even if the stuff of experience happens in schools.

For teachers working artistically, this close attention means seeing not only students' learning-faces – those who teach typically call it "the look" – but also seeing pain and joy in students' lives, curricula that do not tell entire stories, and the economic realities of the worlds their students re-enter at the end of the day. Brandon says that he can see "that look" on his students' faces when they make art under Meg's tutelage. The brightness of seeing students learn shimmers elusively against a backdrop where very few of them can hope for jobs and a tight school schedule that otherwise makes the kind of hands-on and time intensity required for artistic work a deep risk for standardized test results. Sometimes it is easier to *not* pay attention to the particularities; the work is more complicated when in conversation with other ways of encountering working, teaching, and knowledge-making. For Arendt (1958/1998), the subject is simultaneously an actor and a sufferer, whose stories are filled with deeds and sufferings. Since all speech and action act into a medium that build chains of reaction beyond what could be intended or foreseen, and because action sparks secondary reactions and actions that the initial act could not have predicted, agents are both actors and those who are acted-upon. What happens in tandem with actions are reactions, but are more than responses – they are

actions that strike out on their own and affect others in the process. Action "always establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 190). Action is boundless and has a tremendous capacity for establishing relationships, and it is these characteristics of action that necessitate boundaries. But paying close attention to both action and suffering; enabling them to exist simultaneously – is hard work that may be easier to ignore than to continue.

Making Art, Making Artists

Sennett (2008) makes a simple proposal about engaged material consciousness: "we become particularly interested in the things we can change" (p. 120). A sense of ability to change is directly related to one's own knowledge of the material at hand (and curiosity about its state and qualities), as well as one's own agency and ability to act. In a way, one must learn that a situation is, perhaps, imaginably malleable prior to becoming particularly interested in it. Pedagogically, Meg's consistent practice is to show students finished products and the raw materials that were used to create a finished product – from its inception, students see that the raw materials are imaginably malleable. Teachers do not have access to "finished products" to show their students, however; if teachers' finished products in their classrooms are *students*, then to what are current students to look to gain some sort of sense of where they might be headed?

At the level of the classroom, teachers who have experienced the process of making a book see that their classrooms, curricula, and experiences are highly malleable. Teachers have the (dis)advantage of foresight and a broad understanding of the corresponding curricular and management structures, which means that they have the

knowledge to make longer-term decisions as they understand how their current actions fit into a narrative and curricular whole – and also serves to constrain their choices, because the narrative is so firmly established. Imagining its malleability in light of the dire consequences that "failing" would have for self, student, and school, though, seems somewhat dangerous. One of the dangers of the bookmaking process with Meg is that teachers engage in this material process of altering materials into changed states, a process which they firmly believe is possible with their students (as they articulate their reasons for teaching), but often rather impossible with the structure that governs the ways in which they can work with their students and perform their work.

Teachers can work as artists in the contexts of their classrooms, where their mastery of skill, relationships with students, the curricula, and the world all come together. Meg works as an artist in their classrooms, too. Meg also works as an artist in the organization of schooling in the county, negotiating the boundaries of Penland and the Mitchell County Schools and bound neither by the professional desires of Penland's quest for security and status in the art world nor the professional desires of the Mitchell County Schools' quest for economic success and adequate yearly progress. As an organizational boundary worker, Meg has much more agency to construct and create in the contexts of the organization of schooling than teachers do; they are constrained to their classrooms unless they want to take on the organization of the school more broadly (something better done by moving *up* the educational professional ladder, not *into* pedagogical practice).

I understand *why* teachers would reject being artists, despite the similarities in their process to Meg's work; I, too, rejected the "artist" label while in Mitchell County and in other contexts where I speak to those who make paintings and dances and music.

At the same point, however, there is a symbolic and political efficacy to "being an artist" that could lend teachers resources for resisting the very organization of schooling that *constrains* their possibilities of working as artists outside of their classrooms. Positioning myself as an artist in my own teaching and research has given me different ground on which to stand as I articulate the reasons why I have do something differently than the method that was once prescribed. While I found aesthetic practices articulated to the work of teaching in deep and iterative ways, the dissonance between discourses of professionalism and discourses of aesthetics remains the issue. Imbuing the work of teaching with the discourses and practices of artistic work may help to provide a foothold against the ever-encroaching strongholds of stultifying standardization in the organization of schooling. There is risk in writing the previous sentence, however; part of what makes Meg's work and these teachers' work in classrooms the joy they are to witness is that they have developed with contextual specificity rather than wholesale imposition. Usurping artistic work and imposing standardized aesthetic language in classrooms, would, in a painful paradox, further limit the creative room for aesthetic *practice* in classrooms.

Chapter Six: The Power of Articulation

> As the world grows smaller, we must deal with diverse, distant peoples. Consequently, we need theories of communication that edify action and humanize without offering openness, disclosure, and shared values as standards by which all social relationships must be judged. Organization is not always facilitated by greater understanding. Revelation of certain kinds of information can be futile or make matters worse. Given the incommensurability of languages and value systems, it is preferable in many cases to seek tolerance of diversity, coordination of activities, and respect for others than it is to work for shared understanding or agreement. (Eisenberg, 1990/2007, p. 95)

> …the market at the crossroads may be a metaphor for metaphor itself, or for any original speech, the linguistic flowers that sprout at the crossroads of the mind. The mind articulates newly where there is true coincidence, where roads parallel and roads contrary suddenly converge. This world is suffused with time and space, and therefore fresh speech is always appearing, always being invented. The world is teeming, so mind is teeming, so speech is teeming. There is no end to contingency, and so no end to language. We poeticize as transient. […] If there were a single, unchanging language, the world would be hard upon us, the heavens would be hard upon us, the government would be hard upon us, and we would long for a traveling poet to tell the old story, how Coyote went to sleep during the council of all the animals, and dreamed of eating meat. (Hyde, 1998, pp. 299-300)

School classrooms are still teachers' *studios* – the spaces where they work artistically to apply skill and material in the process of making beautiful work. The professional studios at Penland are a major draw to its campus, proudly advertised as spaces in which Penland students learn to *live their creative lives*. The educative experiences of teaching, for teachers, are not those kinds of studio spaces; few places in the discourse surrounding American K12 public school teaching create space to even *imagine* that classrooms might be studios where teachers can live out their creative lives.

If Meg's artistic practice offers an alternative to the organization of schooling, it is an alternative full of mistake-making, failure, and improvising around mistakes: the consistently iterative elements of a capricious or "happy genius" response to moments of crisis that bubble up with students. Though these elements are articulated to teachers' own work in significant ways, as I detailed in the last chapter, teachers insist heartily *that they are not artists.* I was initially surprised by the similarities between Meg's work and the teachers' work in their classrooms. Though I have long pursued an art-based pedagogy in the university courses that I teach, I realized that I had a curricular and pedagogical freedom not shared by teachers in the public school system. I also, in my own classrooms, have a freedom from prescribed method. I learned to be a teacher by observing some of my own great teachers, watching students' responses to my attempts, and teaching my way through the surprises and mistakes.

Still, even within the conscribed and professionalized space of the school, teachers in the Mitchell County Schools engage in face-to-face work with students in richly communicative and deeply aesthetic ways. As I came to understand the ways in which teachers' identities as *non-artists* existed in tension with the ways in which many of them performed their own artistic work in their classrooms, I became curious about whether or not their negation of "artist" mattered. I believe it does. The ways in the process of *doing* artistic work rearticulates the organization of schooling offers both powerful counter-narratives and counter-practices to typical ways of organizing standardized schooling. The articulation of artistic work to the organization of schooling occurs at the level of practice as well as the level of language. Standardization, mechanization, and abstraction have long undergirded the organization of schooling; the

articulation of aesthetic practice and language to the work of teaching generates possibilities for teachers to articulate their work differently than the models they are most frequently provided.

The organization of schooling is thoroughly blanketed in audit culture (Ravitch, 2000, 2010; Taubman, 2009, 2011). The organization of education is such that even along the remote perimeter of western North Carolina, where few opportunities for professional work exist, discourses of professionalism (and many of its corporate trappings) pervade the work of the schools. Teachers and administrators alike struggle to resist this influence. The Penland School of Crafts, a rich resource for Mitchell County in many ways, has through its own process of professionalization inevitably and unwittingly separated itself from the community and the schools.

Despite the blanket of audit culture that drapes across the organization of schooling, the nature of Meg's work in Mitchell County and the ways in which teachers there, too, are engaged in deeply aesthetic and iterative work stand as a stark reminder that though artistic work is by no means a panacea, audit culture is not entirely defeating. In fact, some of the characteristics of Mitchell County that I have discussed throughout this project, characteristics which *foster* the kind of deep relationships Meg has with the artist community in and surrounding the Penland School of Crafts and those involved in education and the Mitchell County Schools, could *also* foster some ways to better support teachers' work as artistic and aesthetic. While artistic and aesthetic work cannot be implemented nationally to *re-organize* education, more is possible in Mitchell County than currently exists. The blanket of audit culture that exists nationally is, perhaps, what makes the loss of this opportunity in Mitchell County so poignant, for *there* exist the

possibilities for stronger relationships and intentional partnerships between the work of artists, the Penland School of Crafts, and the Mitchell County Schools.

The Ways Art Works

Art functions to estrange us from our realities; craft confines us to that which we recognize and use (Grumet, 1988; Risatti, 2007). Craft is characterized for its use-value coupled with aesthetics: craft's (lowly) significance and status relate to its object-ness and usefulness. Its symbolic value comes after it is too far removed from daily use to be burdened by such mundane associations (Risatti, 2007). Ancient Greek pottery perches catalogued in museums and courses in art history as art objects; as objects of mundane use, they are too far removed from this place and time to beckon use. Still, their bas reliefs and delicately carved and painted blacks and reds have never particularly excited my sensibilities – I couldn't touch them.

My father inherited a set of hand-carved hand-planes from his great uncle, who was a carpenter. A weekend woodworker, he often encouraged me to join him in his shop. The feel of those hand planes in my small hands and the delicate wood-shave ringlets that formed as I ran the planes along wood still come to mind as I sit at the kitchen table that we made together. Most of the lumber we used came from somewhere we knew, a finite source that in and of itself had stories and significance. The stack of walnut, oak, and sassafras on the drying racks came from Gram and Pap's backyard; he and his brother had planted them in the yard as saplings after the too-far inland hurricane ripped through those woods. There they stood until toppled by the tornado I remember from my childhood. From those splinters they became three bureaus – one Walnut, one Oak, one Sassafras. Those trees continue to occasionally hide small children and

treasures, just now in different form, along walls of our family's homes. Perhaps I have always had a proclivity for *the craft of making* rather than art made, particularly craft in the making to be used well. A certain twinge of romanticism pervades this, possibly, though its value far merits conversation typically reserved for arts higher than craft, than making, learning and teaching.

Though craft's thing-ness dominates, craft can also startlingly re-focus our attention. It was craft work, after all, that rooted Black Mountain College's experiment in progressive education. Craft work that, in the words of Bauhaus artist and Black Mountain College professor Anni Albers (1944), was the only way in which an education could help students learn to "rebuild the world" (p. 21). Craft work at Black Mountain, the craft work of which Albers wrote, was *not* a romantic revival of some form of lost mountain craft. The Bauhaus tradition that Josef and Anni Albers brought to Black Mountain College coupled a close attention to functionality and use with design and aesthetics. Josef Albers refused even to acknowledge the young people studying at Black Mountain College students as artists – they were *students* working in form, material, and opening their eyes (Duberman, 1972). The work ethic of the college, where all participated in hand-work involved in the upkeep and provision for the university hearkens to a kind of handwork that necessarily characterizes working in craft. This is significant because, unlike the abstractions possible through a work of art which estranges us from the world in which we take ourselves for granted, craft work requires a primacy of experience in which the human hand cannot be escaped.

A man I dated many years ago drank tea from "the perfect mug" at a tea shop on the canal near where we lived. He disappeared one afternoon of a colorful fall weekend,

on a quest to find the workshop where this mug was made. He found it, eventually – a man's hobbyist workshop tucked in the wooded seclusion of south-central Indiana. When he gave me a birthday present that year – a perfect mug of my own – he recounted how he and this man sat with the garage door open and talked. After an hour or so, this potter-hobbyist-crafter pulled several mugs for him to try. The mug he selected for me *is* perfect, shaped for my long-fingered piano player's hands. With a wide handle that does not conduct too much heat, a hexagonal base, and a round, thin top, it is nearly impossible to topple and yet perfect for sipping. Large enough for two whole cups of tea and narrow enough to keep its contents warm until they're through, I drink from this mug every day. Red clay still visible underneath, its sides drip with wide, warm swashes of muted greens and browns and a surprising splash of turquoises; a drip of running glaze was fired into permanence on one of its panels before it was wiped away.

Yes, it is only a mug. Yet, its startlingly perfect proportions fit my all-too-human hands, revealing a relationship between the maker's hand and material in a way that the novelty Starbucks mugs my father collects from around the world never will. My father's mugs function differently, of course, as mundane objects with attached symbolic value. Using his mugs throughout the week for everyday coffee drinking has the potential to remind him of when, in Beijing, we looked at the sun without shielding our eyes because the smog so occluded its light. Or when, in Maui, our brakes smoked as we gripped the edges of a snaking twenty-nine miles down a volcano on rented bicycles. Of when, in Auburn, he beamed with pride as my younger sister walked across a December stage to accept a degree six months earlier than anticipated. The symbolic value of those mugs he collects takes primacy over their material value in ways that, outside this recollection, my

mug's symbolic value (as a token of care from a long-ago ex-boyfriend) dissolves into its materiality and the daily use in the years that have followed.

The social and historical moment in which we are in – fully preceded by the mechanization of work brought about by the industrial revolution – is a moment in which abstract design (executed by machines) is valued far more than the technical skill necessary to carry out those designs. In a chilling estimation of the logic surrounding the relationship between design and mechanized production, Risatti (2007) comments:

> In the present industrial-technological climate, conceptualizing is valued over execution, execution seemingly being reduced in importance to the level of the rote or mechanical. I presume the logic runs as follows: "After all, if machines can do it, how important and creative can the process of execution be?" (p. 169)

The rub is that very similar logic is seen in the mechanized bureaucratization of American public schooling and de-professionalizing of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Grumet, 1988). White-collar or "professional" work is the work for which education strives to prepare students; our discourse surrounding these kinds of work often obscures other kinds of meaningful, fulfilling, and economically viable ways of working (Cheney et al., 2010; Crawford, 2009; Kincheloe, 1999). In these visible occupations, discussion of which dominates our popular and scholarly discourse (Cheney et al., 2010; Trethewey, Scott, & LeGreco, 2006), an estrangement from one's life and rhythms of the world are an almost-necessary component. American public schooling is organized with the goal to shape professional bodies and professionally-able minds of students for these visible professions (Grumet, 1988; Kincheloe, 1999; Tyack, 1974). This kind of training treats knowledge as something gained through compliance to an existing system (Ellsworth, 2005; Freire, 1970/2000) while working to erase meaningful difference,

resulting often in alienation and individual and social hurt (Booth, 2001; Kincheloe, 1999).

> We live in a world in which there is an immense amount of organization, but it is an external organization, not one of the ordering of a growing experience, one that involves, moreover, the whole of the live creature, toward a fulfilling conclusion. Works of art that are not remote from common life, that are widely enjoyed in a community, are signs of a unified collective life. But they are also marvelous aides in the creation of such a life. (Dewey, 1934/2005, p.84)

I wish not to spurn Dewey's reminder of the importance of collective experience; estrangement from connection to collective life is all familiar to dismiss. Community-oriented works of art are often celebrated and demonstrate a sense of community or collectivity and an attention to the merits of beauty in crafting an environment or space: community-built mosaics rise along boundary-walls of parks and reclaimed railways-turned-pedestrian walkways; or plywood on decrepit buildings and blocks slowly covered with murals and flowers of what they once were or might be. The backdrop of a spectacular vista of the natural world can, in my experience, bring some sense of collective enjoyment and life to a disparate crowd – if even for a few moments. Hubris surrounding such shared artworks frames them as a community panacea, now often markers of an urban renewal or desirable gentrification of a hurting urban space. Community-oriented art works and projects can certainly bring economic benefit and may hint toward a unified collective life (Florida, 2002, 2010; HandMade in America, 2010).

I desire, however, to argue that our emphasis needs necessarily to shift from *works* of art that are enjoyed as part of collective life in community to the *work of artists* who go about crafting such things. I have used the word "artist" to describe those engaged in aesthetic activity, even if the products of artistic work *are* deeply recognizable

and use-able within the contours of everyday life. Questioning the possibilities and practices for teachers to teach *as artists* and the structural and symbolic realities which constrain and enable such a practice, Grumet (1988) writes:

> The creative process is not just about bringing experience to form; it is also about expressing our thoughts and feelings about that experience to someone else and finding out what she thinks about it. (pp. 93-94)

With this, she reminds us that aesthetic and artist practice is *neither* entirely about common experience *nor* isolated workmanship happening on the peripheries of societies or schools, but rather about the dialectics of isolation and conversation, creation and sharing, form and expression, and perhaps even private work and some degree of public exchange around it.

Craft's constraint to the contours of the human hand in the material world may confine us in ways art does not. Within craft's confines, however, exists a radical contextuality in which hand and material come into close contact with the qualities, abilities, skills, and strengths of each in ways which must be reconciled in order to draw forth something with aesthetic value and use value. In an era of abstractions and alienation, perhaps craft feels constraining because it inevitably insists on rooting us in the very material existence which we may feel better served to ignore. Institutional, social, and economic realities, for example, may feel as though they are too cemented to be changed and yet pull us all somewhere in the future, scrambling. To craft, to craft well – is to create, is to *make*, exert agency, to draw forth something from something which did not exist before (Bratich, 2011; Risatti, 2007). Craft's paradox lies in the necessary submission to one's material – a submission to skill, practice, material, hand, and world (Crawford, 2009; Sennett, 2008). Matthew Crawford (2009) states this paradox bluntly:

"to be the master of your own stuff entails also being mastered by it" (p. 57). Indeed, it is the relationship between mastering the things of the world *by* submitting to them in which Albers saw the pedagogical and communicative resources to teach students how to rebuild the world.

Breaking What's Supposedly Fixed

As I discussed in the last chapter, one of the tensions characterizing moments when artistic work is articulated to the organization of schooling is the possibility of *happy* mistake-making, or improvisation to figure out how to *use* what is supposedly "fixed" about the curriculum. When this kind of "deviance" is framed professionally, the act is just that – *deviant.* Framed aesthetically, however, the act is creative, art-making, and generative.

One of the possibilities of articulating artistic work to the organization of schooling, then, is what Lynn Harter and her colleagues (2008) discuss as "aesthetic rationality." They name "aesthetic rationality" an organizational logic alternative to the typical instrumental logics of bureaucracy. At the intersections of aesthetic and instrumental rationalities in the workplace, they identify three artistic themes: creation and vocation, ephemeral integration, and survival and social change (p. 448). The authors propose that organizing is an aesthetic endeavor, inviting us to "recognize that organizing offers multiple occasions for exercising our imagination" (Harter et al., 2008, p. 450). They cite creativity and imagination as having the possibilities to "break what is supposedly fixed and carve out new orders" (p. 450). I find the phrase "what's supposedly fixed" is provocative, because the word "fixed" can mean either *stable* or *already made better*. Why move something that is stable? Why break something that has

already been fixed? The rhetoric and justification surrounding school reforms frequently paints *reforms* as innovative and teachers as conservative (Vanderstraeten, 2007), and are often adopted wholesale as saviors of the current plights of schooling (whatever those might be).

School reforms and re-organizations exist to *fix what is supposedly broken* in schools and classrooms. I do not doubt that the broken places that reforms strive to fix are broken; I would have pursued a different career if I thought that the organization of education was working particularly well. My issue with reforms' *fixing what is supposedly broken* is the manner in which those reforms' wholesale scaled implementations often forsake the contextual complexities of particular classrooms and particular student bodies in the name of generalizability across districts, states, and nations. With such wholesale standardization and high-stakes consequences for deviating from the standards, the current culture of schooling (dictated largely by reforms in the early 2000s) seems to create *fixed* classrooms and organizations of schooling. Articulating aesthetic practice to the organization of schooling is a way of *breaking what is supposedly fixed*. Small as these acts of breaking might be, they assume a radical posture in the fixedness of our current organization of schooling.

When teachers work as artists in classrooms, they break what is supposedly fixed in the organization of schooling and in the era of current reforms that have curtailed their own and students' movement through curricula. When they introduce new concepts and processes to their students, teachers sometimes undo the very ways that students have learned to *move their bodies* in classrooms, not to mention the ways in which they and students alike have learned to cognitively move through classroom spaces. Though most

teachers in Mitchell County would not describe their pedagogies as "breaking," the process of teaching and learning moves students from fixed points to other points along a journey.

In a moment that beautifully illustrates breaking what is "supposedly fixed" in the process of carving out new orders, Meg described – at length – the reorganization of her current work that took place after she quit her job in a huff. Several years ago, finally exhausted by the perpetual grind of the work that she was doing, Meg quit her job at Penland. She did not quit with money saved; she quit in a fit, tossing her hands into the air in retreat. Stacey Lane, the Community Collaborative Initiative Director, organizes a number of art-based events in the community, found some grant money and took the year to plan the future of the Teaching Artist Initiative. Meg agreed to work on contract to do the tenth grade projects, but otherwise stayed away while Stacey and Lisa planned. Meg described the process:

> They planned and planned and I just kept my mouth shut and stayed out of it. But they were planning the most amazing thing destined to fail. They were going to mentor [interns] who would come and do this work. And I would be one of the mentors, but they had no guarantee that they could really do it. And what was good about all of that was that they realized that whatever we did, should probably be based on the model of the Family Culture research project, so that it had a chance to change classroom culture. Well, not *change* it, but to be a *part* of classroom culture - really embedded. So that when you get to 10th grade, *you get to do this* - you get to make a North Carolina book or whatever. They realized the importance of this. They also realized the importance of doing something in the elementary school classroom because they had the most flexibility, schedule-wise. And also, it became kind of clear - they did a lot of research - that doing it two years in a row had bigger impact than doing it randomly. So there came this point when I was the hired hand to facilitate conversations with teachers about what this project would look like. They sub-contracted me. Again, I needed the money. And I told you about the moment when I was reeled in - I don't know if I told you about that moment or not.
> Jesica: I don't think I know this.

Meg shook her head, pausing for a long time. She continued:

> So, I facilitated these workshops; these conversations with third grade teachers and fourth grade teachers. And I knew some of them. And we painted, we drew - it was friendly, interesting. And Kathy [a third grade teacher at Deyton in Spruce Pine], who can be so beautifully outspoken, she, you know, got on her high horse one day. (At this point, Meg sat up ramrod straight, put her hands up in the air, and changed the pitch of her voice.) And she said, "Our kids just don't know how to be by themselves. They don't know how to just sit out in the world and enjoy it." (Meg moved back into her own body again.) *That was the moment.* And I was like, "Oh, crap. That's it! That's my skill." Because I *know* how to help kids have that experience. And I didn't say anything, but I was like, "Damn it. Damn it. I guess I'll have to do this work. If it can be on *that point* of helping address that lack." That's something I can do. I'm totally wired for it. God. But it wasn't really, "Oh crap," you know … and because Lisa and Stacey had worked on … what was more sustainable about it? I'm not sure. But before, before … I worked with the grades that wanted to work with me. And they could ask me to do whatever they wanted to ask me to do. Which was kind of good and kind of bad. I mean, I spent a lot of time figuring out how to do gingerbread and globes. But then I didn't repeat it. I didn't, you know, get better at it. They kept changing the terms. And first grade at Gouge always asked me to make journals, but then they didn't really use them. They liked making the journals, but then they didn't figure out how to embed them in the curriculum. There were problems like that. And I credit Lisa and Stacey's planning year work with that - with the effort of *embedding* the work in the classroom and the curriculum so that they weren't marginalized and not used. That's something to be really proud of. Even if still they might not be used in the most creative way in every single case, they're still part of the classroom experience for every kid who's going through these three grades. And that's probably huger than I think, because I'm always looking for something deeper than that. But it's probably bigger than I think, because of the impoverishment of public education.

In Meg's description of the planning process, the work of organizing bookmaking into teachers' classrooms, and her own revelation about the particular skill she could teach to students through her artwork, we see each of the themes of aesthetic rationality: creation and vocation, ephemeral integration, and survival and social change (Harter et al., 2008). We also see a way in which Meg worked *organizationally* as an artist who both created something new and broke something that seemed fixed. What would teachers' work in the organization of schooling beyond their classrooms look like if they could tap into some of the same aesthetic resources?

In some ways, the onus is on Penland to reach out to the community; as a resource of artistic and economic capital, Penland needs to extend its boundaries to the work of the *teachers* in the schools in order to make a greater impact. Perhaps, for instance, instead of asking teachers to involve parents more in the bookmaking process, collaborating with teachers to try to figure out the best ways to involve families, or suggesting that teachers and parents simply come to Penland when it extends an open door, the Community Collaborative Initiative could *reach out* to offer a parent night and *explicitly* extend invitations to students, parents, and teachers alike – *this place is* for *you, too*. Or, even better, the Community Collaborative Initiative could continue showing up in classrooms and at community events, basing the work they do in the expressed, lived experiences of Mitchell County and its schools.

Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) writes about surprising "places of learning" that are richly educative and almost completely outside of the traditional organizations of schooling. Each of the places of learning she describes are monuments, performances, architecture, or museum installations of some sort that force a "hinge" in which a person encounters both a narrated past and the possibility of a future or alternative reality. In these non-traditional places of learning, Ellsworth describes the ways in which aesthetic experience breaks what is supposedly fixed about learning and takes us to an organization of schooling that little to do with school *buildings* and school systems.

The nonprofit organization where my initial questions for this study emerged, which I discussed in Chapter One, is an interesting example of breaking what is supposedly fixed in the organization of typical schooling. Student U is a "school," yet it does not have a building. Most physical schools (online schooling has changed this to a

degree) are organized in and around a building; the physical school plant becomes the organizational hub for education. Student U was a "school without walls" because we operated without a physical plant. Yes, during the 6-week summer program, we "borrowed" a local private school, where we met daily. Often, however, our teachers used Durham as their classrooms; we had access to several mini-buses, were on a city bus route, and our young teachers were adventurous and courageous. All of our Student U students attended Durham Public Schools; during the year, they were scattered throughout Durham at their various schools. The teachers from the summer before continued to meet with their students at students' home schools, community locations, or other organizations in which students and their families got involved. Penland certainly has an understandable attachment and need for its physical plant; yet, Meg's work in the schools clearly demonstrates that artistic work can happen outside of the professional studios on Conley Ridge Road.

There is something else significant in Meg's description; one of the key elements Meg mentioned was the *repetition* that the new organization of the project permitted. Improvisation and craftwork are users' crafts, and Meg's craftwork is iterative. This iteration moves at a different rhythm than the metronome of the organization of typical schooling – K12 schooling and the schooling of the academy. Part of the process of this dissertation has been learning how to *break what is supposedly fixed* in the practice and discourse of academic practice, particularly in critical organizational studies. Articulating my own background in performance studies practice and research to the organization of literature and research practices in my own schooling in critical organizational studies, the tensions that emerged in the language, relationships build, and representational

practices generated some of the resources I have used as I have broken what I perceived to be supposedly fixed: ways of discussing and representing scholarly work.

An Iterative Interruption

Deviating from the instructions of writing a dissertation – stuck, frustrated – confused – I started to write in my own book. Making my book about my dissertation was an iterative process of its own, a mistake, perhaps, that I have also narrated back into the larger structure of what a dissertation is and means. Meg's process is one of iteration, in which she identifies mistakes and draws them back up into her ever-evolving practice of teaching and artist-making with students and teachers. The page in my book that I dedicate to "iteration" begins:

> Of course, as I do this page on iteration, I'm humbled by the fact that my first two attempts at page design were just awful. Trying to cleverly cut out repetitive shapes (circles) then to sew over those ill-thought circles and finding that tedious and sloppy, I've been reminded that what Meg often tells the kids as both still true yet frustrating and a little unnerving: "There are creative ways of dealing with boo-boos, always. And sometimes that becomes the exciting part about art."

Iteration, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is, "the repetition of a process or utterance; repetition of a mathematical or computational procedure applied to the result of a previous application … to get closer to the solution." Iteration, as a concept, was something I first "met" while teaching performance studies for the first time. Judith Butler's theory of gender is that gender is performative – a stylized iteration of acts – that continuously produces genders. This was a breakthrough in thought about gender because previously gender bad been conceived as "expressive" or symptomatic of a person's biologically assigned sex.

Iteration, as a practiced concept, was far more freeing (to me) as a pedagogical and artistic process than as an explanation of how we form and know our (and others')

gendered selves. Recognizing difference and – in the black box, having the freedom to repeat exercises, performances, lessons, questions, and rehearsals – noting differences each time in that those repetitions-with-differences opened up the process for more interrogation and movement within the curricula.

Thinking about Meg's teaching, I am struck by how self-consciously iterative it is and by how it differs from the kinds of iteration possible in the typical K12 classroom and the organization of academic schooling. Meg's process involves the same "phase" of work several times with each group. I typically joined Meg and Adrienne on the 2nd or third days of each lesson they taught, so I missed the very first instances of many of the lessons. Third grade cover construction was an exception; I was able to be present for the first day of that long, hard, gluey lesson. Typically, or what I'd come to expect as typical, is a review-rehash of things in the morning session prior to the students' arrival – I actually thought this was for my own benefit, so that I would know what was going to happen and where to jump in. On my first Ridgeway "first day," though, I realized that some of this repetition of the subsequent mornings was to think through the previous days' successes and stressors and to think critically about steps of the process Meg could control and the parts she couldn't. On November 22, with third grade's beginnings of cover construction, Meg talked through her methodology (using that word) and noted that we needed to get through the first session to remember where the trouble spots were/are.

Even so, no day is the same - even if Meg does precisely the same thing, all sorts of factors beyond her control walk in those doors with the kids. Sometimes it's lateness (on the day I've been writing about, the kids were 45 minutes late because of something goofy with the buses). The whole time, as we sat in the dark studio and waited, Meg

continued to audibly adjust her schedule to accord for each disappearing minute. At least she could "prep" for the lateness; sometimes it's a teacher's attitude or willingness to participate or general overwhelmedness with life and work and school responsibilities beyond the norm (as was the case with a few persons in the fall). Sometimes it's club schedule or drug dogs or fire drills or rain that has stolen recess for the previous days. On some delightful days, it's that a teacher has rewarded her students by playing outside with kites the day before or reviewed (intentionally or not) right angles the day prior to students doing book cover construction (in which a working knowledge of right angles and obtuse angles is quite helpful and builds practical curricular connections). Because Meg only visits each classroom to teach one lesson at a time, she does not work with the students on skills on a day-to-day basis in the ways in which classroom teachers do. Brandon, for example, works in pieces and bits on math concepts with his students until that "little light" goes off and they finally *get* it. Meg's lessons are one time opportunities; she does each one *once* with each group. Different from classroom teachers' teaching, additionally, Meg teaches the same lesson *many times*. In any given year, she will teach eight or nine third grade scratching lessons. A classroom teacher would have to teach for eight or nine *years* to repeat lessons in the ways Meg does as a regular practice. I draw out this distinction because I think it is an important one to mine when thinking about ways to support *teachers'* aesthetic experiences of teaching.

Meg's lessons are so well-crafted. Each one is different, certainly, and yet she hones her skill for each lesson carefully through repetition and practice. As Sennett (2008) and Eisenberg (1990/2007) remind us, improvisation is a "user's craft," a skill, a readiness, and a posture, perhaps, that comes from trying over and over again. The

perpetual forward motion of the school year shapes teachers' experiences of teaching lessons in subsequent motion, while the organization of Meg's lessons build depth over time. The following conversation with fourth grade teachers in Spruce Pine is indicative of the general sentiment about the ever-ongoing rate of forward motion among teachers, principals, and community members in the district.

> Bette: And going along with that, the idea that sometimes those kids who can sew those books together, they might not always be your 3s and 4s. And they start helping others and you can just *see* that glow on their faces.
> Meg: Uh huh.
> Bette: You know? And that happens a lot.
> Jesica: They're *doing* something. And they're making a contribution, and …
> Bette: that's right!
> Jesica: And they're *teaching* something …
> Bette: to someone else! You know, and that's just huge. And I think, you know, being a teacher you feel like – or I feel like, I should say, that you can never do enough. You can never do enough. It's, "Okay, we have 90% of our 5th grade at levels 3 and 4."
> Jesica: Uh huh.
> Bette: So guess what? Now they're going to raise the bar.
> Dana: Uh huh.
> Bette: If you're going to keep on getting the money …
> Meg: It's so defeating. It's so defeating.
> Bette: … you're going to have to get it up to 92%! And so that's something too, that – to make it – teaching, crazy.
> Rhonda: You never reach a point when you feel like you've made it.
> Meg: It's a system that's designed to just keep you …
> Dana: …grinding.
> Jesica: Well, it just doesn't seem like … ninety percent. Ninety percent!
> Bette: *Ninety percent! That's huge!*
> Jesica: That's huge!
> Dana: That's huge.
> Jesica: It's like … not even a moment to celebrate that before …
> Bette: You start *again* ...
> Meg: Yeah, yeah. And on one hand you're so pleased, and on the other it's like "Oh *God*, now there's next year, *aaaaahhh*!"

Though the daily act of teaching K12 is far more able to be iterative in adaptation to particular students' makeup and quirks and tendencies and interactions, K12 teaching doesn't necessarily set the stage for "re-trying" or "repeating" the first lesson on

craftsmanship or paying attention to the mornings or one's hands. There is a way in which Meg seems able to practice her teaching *as an art* in ways that the K12 structure doesn't necessarily permit classroom teachers because she is able to try the "same" lesson over and over (as many as seven or eight times each year) with different groups of kids, just as it's a well-practiced artistic habit to work and re-work a certain kind of pot or drawing or painting or image, practicing iteratively the "same" step and learning from those repetitions-with-differences. The classroom system of K12 is forward-moving, iterative in interaction with students and the re-working of concepts until they're "gotten," but not iterative in terms of steps in the process.

Amy Duma and Lynne Silverstein (2008) describe the in-depth and lengthy professional development for the teaching-artists involved with the Kennedy Center. Each teaching artist who goes through the workshop development process with the Kennedy Center engages in an iterative cycle of conception, planning, rehearsal, feedback, re-development, and execution in order to carefully craft a "professionally developed" professional development workshop for teachers. This kind of iterative development and rehearsal of teaching artists' abilities to teach professional development workshops seems as though it is designed to not only work on structure and form, but also to bolster teaching artists' confidence while working in a form other, perhaps, than the media with which they are most comfortable. The intent of the workshops is to develop teaching artists into professional teacher-developers, seeming to miss the fact that *teachers'* teaching work is an ongoing and cultivated practice. I am struck by the fact that this set-up seemingly fails to recognize that school teachers likely require the same

kind of iterative stages of support and development necessary in order to craft arts-integrated lessons in their own classrooms.

While the Kennedy Center's program focuses on developing teaching artists as professional developers of teachers, teachers are still offered a one-off opportunity to engage both a media *and a method* likely unfamiliar to them - media and method, in fact, with which they may feel particularly uncomfortable. The organization for classroom teachers is markedly different from the organization of experience Meg – and I – have encountered when teaching art in schools. In August 2011, I visited Meg after I taught bookmaking workshops in Durham – the bookmaking workshops I described at the end of the first chapter.

> Jesica: I know that I was in classes with you all last year and you talked me though teaching these pamphlet books, but …
> Meg: Well that's probably part of your work! Is doing it. It's just - you learn by doing!
> Jesica: I got to teach back to back lessons, and it was incredible
> Meg: the learning curve
> Jesica: the edits that I could make in back to back lessons.
> Meg: uh huh
> Jesica: Like, "Oh! That part needs to come first," or, "Well, that's just not where we are today."
> Meg: I think that's a part of this interview. I came here as, oh, I think maybe a 23 year old person, and I had never had an education course in my life, but I'd been studying how to teach *hard*, all my life. And I've still never had an education class. But I guess what it speaks to is the value of experience. But you need to be - you can't be just hung out to dry in front of a classroom without having some help, either. And I think that when I was 16 and learning to teach in my clay classes, my co-teacher, my mentor teacher, she was there. So if I fell on my face, the kids didn't suffer. You know, but - the point is, we learn by experience. We learn through that conversation with our students. And it becomes really clear really fast what doesn't work. And you just have to keep honing in on that and honing in on it and honing in on it and you can ask other people how they do it too, but that's an important piece: learning through raw experience. It's big. I wish more teachers could be trained that way. But, I guess it's like our public education is, in my opinion, is obscenely abstract. And our training for teachers is obscenely abstract. So it's a wonder that things happen *at all*.

Working with the Specific

Meg's lament that public education and the training for teachers is "obscenely abstract" resonates with a tension I felt as her artistic work was articulated to the organization of schooling: her craftwork, and teachers' daily negotiations of students' bodies, minds, hopes, and lived realities, stand in too-stark close-up contrast to the abstraction of professionalism. In Chapter One I described how Paulus' re-woven images brought a close-up look at something ordinary and often overlooked. Similarly, the aesthetic nature of Meg's artwork and teachers' teaching work brings the specificity of the world and the students' lives, often obscured, into sharp focus. Noting this tension, I am reminded of philosopher Robert Pirsig's (1974) admission that the students he liked most were the students who most frequently failed his classes; he was not very interested in students who were good at being "good students." To write such a thing is to commit a cardinal sin of teaching – to admit to liking students better than others and *then*, at that, to admit to liking students who *were not good students* – Pirsig's admission surely reflects poorly on his own (in)abilities as a teacher. "Good" teachers are able to curtail such bad behavior. These notions of "good students" and "good teachers," though, underscore the nature of abstract, professional teaching in an audit culture and foreclose the possibilities of actively resisting such a culture by naming one's work as aesthetic.

When I first began teaching, well-meaning advisors told me that to be a successful teacher, I needed to learn how to give "the look." Most of us who have been in schools as students know "the look" of which I write. It's the look used to stop behavior, curtailing those private impulses from manifesting into outward displays. The look communicates: "I'm watching, and I know that *you know* that you are going to *stop that right now.*" I

have never been particularly successful at giving this look. I am typically more interested in finding out what those fidgety students – Pirsig's (1974) "bad students" whose behavior and attitudes might most merit the look – are up to in the back corner of the room. Perhaps I just identify with those kids too much, in some ways; often bored by my classroom surroundings, I caused disruptions or disengaged unless given the freedom to create my own projects and assignments. It was not just academic schooling, however. In the small satellite school of the Nutmeg Ballet Company in Simsbury, Connecticut, this look was the look of the forever-crotchety Ms. Buck dealt so often and fiercely that, recalling that dancing experience in adulthood, I often wonder if she was able to inflict such physical discomfort without touching us. My memory of her feels as though those looks were instead her long, bony fingers, jabbed into my ribcage as I tried to straighten my posture.

The current organization of schooling relies on the look, literal and metaphorical, that it gives to teachers and students as it reminds us to take our places. Critical scholar Paul Willis (1977) describes the schooling-scene poignantly:

> The school is the agency of face to face control *par excellence.* The stern look of the inquiring teacher; the relentless pursuit of 'the truth' set up as a value even above good behavior; the common weapon of ridicule; the techniques learned over time whereby particular troublemakers can 'always be reduced to tears'; the stereotyped deputy head, body poised, head lowered, finger jabbing the culprit; the head unexpectedly bearing down on a group in the corridor – these are all tactics for exposing and destroying, or freezing, the private. (Willis, 1977, p. 65)

Willis writes that the *thing* that schooling cannot tolerate is the private, the internal lives of students. Within the internal lives of students lie the possibilities that we, the teachers, cannot control. I argue that the school cannot tolerate the internal lives *of teachers*, either. Teachers are people who work with unknowable and ever-growing students in an

ongoing communicative exchange between culture, family, curricula, and the world (Britzman, 2009) – and yet teachers are framed as vehicles for information, disciplinarians, pseudo-professionals, or public servants (Taubman, 2009). The symbolic possibilities for teachers to objectify their own experiences so that those experiences might be shared with others in pride, not shame, are quite limited. Do not let the students see the process by which they are educated; they will revolt.

The look that is used in schooling to control is *not* the look in schooling that marks the creation of new knowledge – acquiescence to existing knowledge, perhaps, but not the creation of new knowledge. We have ways of talking about when students learn noncompliance or make knowledge on their own; often, it is called "the look." Brandon describes it:

> Yeah, you can kind of get those, little lights– that little excitement level kind of cranks up and it (laughing) can get a little dramatic, you know. But you can kind of tell. And of course that's sort of individual by individual, but a lot of it – sometimes they'd hit a little pothole in the road, so to speak. And some of them would ask me and I'd say, "Uh, sorry …I can't really help you with this because I don't really have a clue myself!" I just try to tell it like it is, I guess.

Meg also describes "the look":

> What I'm basically tuned into is that little point of transformation, and you can tell it in a classroom, when the participants somehow in a nonverbal way know themselves as somehow greater than - or more than or bigger than or deeper than - than they were at the beginning of the experience. And I feel like this has been a really easy community to touch that source, again and again and again. It doesn't always happen; there are frustrating situations, for sure. But the lack of sense of entitlement here, there's just a pleasant openness to good hearts. And a willingness to try! I'm always touched that even though the high school kids in their awkwardness might paint incredibly stereotypical, naive, awkward images, they're not afraid to do it! They're not embarrassed to do it, and they're willing. And it's that easy willingness; I've never not encountered it here. It makes it fun to serve. It's not hard. I mean, the work is hard. But the point of connection isn't hard. So, yeah - I just came here and started working with the public schools.

In both of these descriptions, Brandon and Meg describe ways in which students somehow *snap* into knowing – a different relationship with material and skill and knowledge. Those moments are often associated with trying something new, and "the look," I believe, is deeply satisfying for those who see it happen. It is about expanding the possibilities of experience with the world: the kinds of engagement with others in the world that Eisenberg (2007) advocates as he tries to move us away from organizing for clarity toward ambiguity; the kinds of engagement with others in the world that Deetz (1992, 2005) pushes us toward as he encourages us to communicate in order to create conflict instead of fortifying the boundaries that separate *you* from *me* all the time; and the kinds of engagement with others in the world that Hyde (1998) reminds us are the sources through which poetry and art may bubble up, even through cracks and decay. These are the kinds of possibilities that can encourage richer, more aesthetic ways of teaching.

As Grumet (1988) writes, "the look of pedagogy is the sideways glance that watches the student out of the corner of the eye" (p. 116). The contemporary arrangement of the schools situates teachers to only look at their students (Grumet, 1988; Taubman, 2009; Willis, 1977), limiting the possibilities for teachers to look at the world or to look out the window so that students have space to assert themselves outside of the furtive straight-on glance. In the shoulder-to-shoulder arrangement of craftwork in classrooms, the gaze is literally and figuratively shifted. Literally, the arrangement of classroom in shoulder-to-shoulder formation places the teacher *among* students instead of in *front* of students, limiting their collective gaze on her and her constant gaze toward them. She must gaze *across* and sideways and down the row and consciously *at her own work* to

which she must pay close attention if she is going to create something with which she is pleased. For though our hands are smart, they are not smart enough to paint images of our worlds without engaging some of the sight we use to control others as we stop to pause and consume the sights around us, even if in our minds' eye. I wonder what the possibilities of teaching and working might be if those gazes, so thoroughly directed to prevent contingency, softened to soak in more of the world, more of each others' work, and more of the possibilities of crafting our work experiences side by side.

The side by side orientation of the craft workshop is related to its reorganization of skill, material, and hand – the side by side orientation of the craft workshop, too, limits the control that a teacher might exert through the look of schooling, while increasing her possibility to see students looks of knowledge-making. Craft is proportionally related to the human in size, limits of efficiency and production, strength, and durability. Because these limitations are shared by many humans, art theorist Howard Risatti (2007) contends that craft objects remind us of our own limitations as creative and human bodies, re-orienting our sense of how to relate to other objects in the world, manmade and natural.

> In this way craft offers an important corrective or counterbalance to an institutional mentality that today is more and more modeled on a mechano-techno-scientific rationalism that has done much to disenchant the world and the things in it; by disenchant I mean taking the magic and even the wonder out of the world by accounting for everything, including all actions and experience, in rational, empirical terms. (Risatti, 2007, p. 186)

Risatti is careful to argue that the benefits of craft and craftsmanship are not part of a nostalgia or romanticism of the past, as industrialization and modernization have certainly enhanced the quality of life for many people around the globe. His concerns with industrialization and modernization are with the fetish of efficiency and productivity and the cost at which ever-increasing rationalization of processes come (Hawkin, Lovins,

& Lovins, 1999; Ritzer, 2011; Weber, 1958/2003). To what extent does our ability to mechanize and "make efficient" human processes determine our need to do so?

There is a potential point of danger here: if Meg's work or teachers' aesthetic work were to become too repetitive, too monotonous, too repeated, her aesthetic practice could potentially be co-opted to a standardized set of lessons implemented in a broader fashion than her currently nuanced interactions. Organizational scholars Harter et al. (2008) base their conclusions about aesthetic rationalities in bureaucratic spaces on observations made from an artist studio run by a social service agency serving adults with various cognitive and developmental disabilities. The artists (the disabled adults) and the staff (who were also artists) supported the studio and made a salary by producing art and craft pieces for sale to the general public (who could order pieces). Across their experiences, *creation* of artistic works was satisfying, but the instrumental need to produce *many of those pieces* often shifted their work from *creation* to *production*. While they understood that production was a necessary part of selling artwork, the pressures of time and demand co-opted time that they could have to *create*, which thereby also diminished their creative desires and capacities. During seasons of exclusively high production, they were very unsatisfied with their work. While the perpetual forward-pushing calendar of the K12 teaching arrangement champions pace over potential depth, idealizing depth at the loss of pace or breadth could have definite constraining possibilities, as well.

As John Dewey (1934/2005) contends, art arises not from the imposition of technical skill or wit but rather from curiosity and imagination and a dedication that manifests in time and experience. Art might be connected to a particular occurrence in

time and space, but the fullness of experience that leads up to its creation and exceeds its material bounds is where the possibilities of the aesthetic and knowledge-making powers of experience lie (Dewey, 1934/2005). The quality of relationships among experience, material, and time are the stuff which garner possibilities of newness and artistry *or* mechanics. "Subconscious maturation precedes creative production in every line of human endeavor," Dewey (1934/2005, p. 76) writes. "The direct effort of 'wit and will' of itself never gave birth to anything that is not mechanical; their function is necessary, but it is to let loose allies that exist outside their scope."

Tamara is a third grade teacher who is willing to make art and work artistically, even if the end product isn't characteristically beautiful. She says the following about other teachers, less willing to engage Meg's process, being required by the school district and Penland to attend some sort of bookmaking workshop of their own:

> I think you make it a requirement. It's not an entitlement thing, again – the teachers don't need to become entitled either, thinking that they'll automatically get to do the project, that it's just a thing that's going to happen. Because it's not impactful, and not respectful if you're not putting your effort in. So … and I won't say that for everyone because there are some people who are really, totally involved with the project. But the new ones don't understand it, and some of the ones who never wanted this, or just see it as something for their students *to do* just don't put anything into it. I don't want to deprive the students, but there needs to be a way to say, "if you're not willing to invest in it, you're not going to be a good leader for the students anyway, so what kind of …Yes, it will be a good experience for them, but if you're not going to give them any good guidance for the whole month, where they're needing to do things day in and day out – I mean, you have to give them a lot of guidance in order for them to do it. So if you're not going to give them that direction anyway, what's the total benefit for them? I mean, a lot of exhaustion for Meg and a lot of exhaustion for everyone else." There has to come a point, and I hate to say it, but if you don't show up for a mandatory teacher meeting in the beginning and you don't do this, then your class doesn't get to do it. And we hate that – we want every student to receive that. And I think that for the first couple of years there might be one or two who wouldn't do it and their students wouldn't get it, but after that, with peer pressure from the students and fellow teachers, would bring those teachers back in. But I think they have to be willing to say – be willing to honor the integrity of the program in

> order to say, "Consistently, your students haven't done this and it's because you're not participating." I think you have to remedy that.

At first rub, Tamara's desire for mandatory teacher participation and a level of excellence may come across as slightly callous. If teachers did not participate in the workshops offered by Penland and the school, then students would miss out on an experience that, likely, they would never otherwise have. Meg hesitated to institute any kind of district-wide bookmaking workshops for teachers for years, not wanting to impose too much structure or too many requirements on teachers' already-full loads. Perhaps, too, Meg hoped to draw teachers to the work rather than placing one more mandate on them. As supportive as Meg is of the work of teachers and the possibilities of education, she and her work are inherently critical of the ways in which schooling is currently arranged.

For the 2011-2012 school year, Meg and Morgen established teacher work-days that gave teachers credit for their attendance at her workshops. Depending on how these workshops were facilitated, they could have significant impact on the "learning through experience" and "trying with help" that Meg characterized as necessary components of learning. Teachers were hungry to share with one another, though I do not believe that they got many chances to do so during the school year. I enjoy reading the following section of conversation I had with the fourth grade teachers, as our meeting happened to turn into a process of idea-sharing, an opportunity to sit down and really talk about their process with one another. One of the teachers mentioned something about a cookie, which confused me - I asked for clarification. Paula grabbed a stack of students' books to pull a few examples, sharing them around the table:

> Rhonda: (Seeing this for the first time, I assume, looking at the books with me) … Oh, *cute*.
> Jennifer: Then we made a regional brochure, and that went really well.

Dana: They worked in groups on different regions.
Paula: And that was one of the ones I did get accomplished, and my kids loved – with the exception of one or two children – they loved working in groups.
Jennifer: Yeah, I had them work in groups too.
Paula: Yeah, and you kind of guided me through. I'd like to have them do something with animals next year. Not a brochure, but trading cards or something.
Dana: Mine enjoyed that, believe it or not.
Paula: And the postage stamp. I liked that idea.
Bette: We need to remember to do the cookie first, before we try to do the salt map! (Pointing to a photograph of a student's salt map; the "state" more closely resembled a blob than the state and the "regions" weren't proportioned in any way to reflect the actual geography of North Carolina). Because (pointing to this photograph), *"That's North Carolina!"*
Paula: Yes. They have no concept – you show them a picture or a map of the state and they have no idea where the mountains are … this really helps them.
Rhonda: It does, uh huh.
Paula: To help them at least say, "This is the mountain region of North Carolina."
Jesica: Are you able to share ideas with each other during the school year?
(All) Oh my gosh … (At this point, everyone starts talking at the same time. I'm sure in the moment we were all able to understand one another, but the recording is relatively cacophonous at this point and unhelpful. The general gist: Yes, they share ideas with one another, but briefly after school or by popping into one another's classrooms while they're working on projects. But all project-idea sharing happens *as* it is ongoing rather than in any kind of planning stage where they could incorporate one another's good ideas into the overarching structure/plan for how they were going to guide their students through the books.)
Jesica: So, sharing – if you find something that works …
Bette: If we find something that works, we'll normally …
Jennifer: Pop and say, "This is what I did, and this works – or this didn't."
Bette: But as far as formal sitting down and talking, we don't do a lot of that, but we do *share* and help each other through.

I believe that artists, whether producing works that estrange us from our lives or make the *estrangement* of our lives appear strange, work performatively along the lines we often draw between self and community, content and process, material and tool, and expertise and experience. Working artistically is not, in fact, a particularly easy process, nor is it professional work. It is the work of craft at Penland and the work of teaching in the Mitchell County Schools; the work foreshortened by the desire of the professional. I believe that there are ways to deepen artistic work and the organization of schooling. In

the last chapter, we saw the ways in which Meg's artistic work offers alternatives to the organizations of work experience so tied up in teaching, even as the work of teaching itself is characterized by many of the same communicative elements as Meg's artwork. If Meg makes art, and kids make books, teachers make kids. Meg practices her artwork and develops that deep skill with students in the studio, and yet the gallery of the classroom is a vital space for her negotiated work. Kids live into their books in the studios of their classrooms and homes. Even still, sharing their work with one another in the galleries of "talk-backs" with teachers, Meg, and their fellow students, and with parents or siblings around their kitchen tables helps to make their artwork come alive. Teachers work in the studios of their classrooms with their students, but as all artists, they need a gallery, too (Grumet, 1988). Where are the possibilities for teachers' galleries?

Gallery Space

In the Mitchell County Schools, there exist a few interesting opportunities for sharing and gallery-type spaces, though none are exclusively related to artistic work or name teaching as an aesthetic practice. In fact, many of these current "gallery" practices are framed by discourses of professionalism. Morgen, the Mitchell County Schools' Director of Curriculum and Technology, described the development of his role in the district as coming out of a need for standardization and replicability throughout the school district. Though standardization and replicability are associated with the worst kinds of standardized overlording of education (Ravitch, 2010; Taubman, 2009), Morgen defined this quest for "standardization and replicability" as a *practice of sharing knowledge and networking among schools and between grades* – a kind of sharing much more akin to a craft mobility or craft-training than creating standardization for

replicability. Still, though, this sharing practice is justified by a discourse of professionalism.

Gary Moore, the principal at Spruce Pine's Deyton Elementary School, told me with a quiet pride about one aspect of his teachers' "professional development," endeavors: *learning walks*. Though I loathe the name "professional development," what Gary described is a richer form of skill-sharing. Once a month, teachers take *learning walks*, wandering around the building and into others' classrooms. They do this for about a week in preparation for an all-staff meeting. On those *learning walks*, teachers mine the classroom experiences of others for methods and skills that they can "steal" and use in their own classrooms. Not only do teachers "steal" practices they observe from other teachers, they also publicly acknowledge and honor the pieces of each others' teaching work that they admire. In this sense, meetings become a kind of gallery in which teachers can honor one another's work. As Gary told me about these learning walks, he took great pride in acknowledging the *teachers'* desire to bring this practice into the school. Though Gary introduced the idea to the school by bringing in one of his former college professors, the teachers were who convinced him to "give the go-ahead" with the process.

> We all bought into it together. When the time came, I said, "We'll do it," but it wasn't a hard sell because they already wanted to do it. So we're all on the same page – help the kids, bottom line – we are.

An important step in cultivating aesthetic practice in the work of teaching, though, is to move away from the language of "helping the kids" and more toward creating space in which teachers can deeply practice, and take pride in, their meaningful work as teachers.

Morgen has helped to bring teachers of the same grades across the district together to meet and share their practices with one another, and has also facilitated

conversations among teachers of different grades. He uses the words "building horizontally" (across all of the third grades in the county, for example) and "building vertically" (among fifth, sixth, and seventh grades, for example) to describe his approach. He uses business lingo, but these conversations and the rationale behind them hearken more to a *building of a community of practice* than typical "standardization and accountability" might indicate. This kind of knowledge sharing resonates more deeply with the transference of knowledge of craft tradition and practice in the craft community. In other words, he perceived that a collective increase in skill and standards in classrooms could only emerge through a collection of shared knowledge across the district. Part of the process of building this kind of community-of-teachers is emphasizing "one class" across the community, and "our work" as the work of all of the teachers. Inviting *all* teachers to graduation ceremonies, for example, is a step that Morgen and the district have taken to foster teachers' senses of participation in a student's arc of development, rather than simply being in charge of a student's passage from one grade to the next.

> When I talked to them afterwards, for one, they were so proud because it's "our" students, not just high school students. I had one teacher, Jennifer Cox, a teacher at Gouge, say, "I didn't think that child would ever make it." But he did make it, and it means that we *are* doing some good things. So it was good positive reinforcement back for them.

One of the greatest laments that Meg's intern, Adrienne, shared with me during a conversation after her internship ended in December (halfway through the students' school year) was that she *never got to see the students finish their projects*. She felt as though she handed projects over to teachers and students and left, abandoning them to whatever might happen. She was missing, I think, a sense of satisfaction that comes from the aesthetic experience of consuming one's work when it is finished. In Meg's own

words at the beginning of this chapter, she describes her lament of the fact that the first grade classes at Gouge used to make books, but never lived into them – one of the greater accomplishments of the planning year Stacey and Lisa took was figuring out how to integrate the books into the culture of the classroom, like in the tenth grade projects. No tenth grade students *don't* finish their books; it's the central structure through which they do all of their work for tenth grade English. Graduation, then, featuring "finished" students, bears the sense of a gallery without the immediacy of being a part of the whole process.

In my own experiences of teaching, I have always found longer-term engagements more satisfactory than one-time or short-term workshops, because I could help guide students' work to its fuller potential. The organization of K12 schooling is such that teachers are responsible for shuttling students from one year to the next, but the project of teachers' work is significantly longer than *one year* of students' lives. Doing things as seemingly simple as using "our students" to describe the *district's* students and inviting *all* of the Mitchell County School teachers to graduation and celebrating *each* of their impacts on graduating students is a way to return a kind of craftwork mentality of teaching, where teachers are craft workers who use their skill in relationship to students and curricula and experience. "Our students" and a collectively-celebrated graduation ceremony stretch the temporal boundaries typically placed on the organization of teaching work, opening even slight possibilities for new rhythms of teaching.

Schooling and the organization of education, more generally, have long been contradictorily isolated endeavors; we see this even in Mitchell County when Gary and several teachers speak about school as a "shelter" or a "haven" from students' home-

lives. While protecting students from harsh realities outside of the school walls is a very worthy endeavor, the isolation of schooling and education typically extends beyond students' physical bodies to circumvent meaningful relationships with other meaning-giving institutions and practices in the community (Ellsworth, 2005). Ironically, the kinds of "corporate colonization" that Deetz (1992) calls a corporate capitalist process is also a frequent practice of the American public schools; schools' frequent isolation from other community organizations creates a specialized culture of schooling vulnerable to corporate colonization. This organization of schooling limits teachers' and students' engagement with other meaning-giving institutions and practices in the community, a travesty in an age when educational resources *for education alone* are ever-becoming more and more sparse and, when available, attached to benchmarks and audits. In the midst of Mitchell County's absolute *wealth* of artists and aesthetic practice, Penland's Teaching Artist Initiative and the Toe River Arts Council's work in schools are laudable yet hardly enough.

Meg has been intentional to include gallery space for the teachers with whom she works: often, at the end-of-year gatherings, teachers bring their books to share with one another – both the books that they made with their own hands and "their books," made by the students in their classes. As I mentioned, many of my interviews for this project revolved around artwork – the work that teachers and I created with our own hands and the work that students were making. The energy surrounding these teacher and teaching-practice conversations is intoxicating; despite the dreadful end-of-year timing in the midst of end-of-grade exams and remediation, teachers say that they enjoy and take a lot of insight *and pleasure* from these conversations.

Currently, there are some gallery spaces for students' work. At the high school, students' final presentations of their "Family Culture and History" projects serve as a wonderful gallery for their work, though Melora hopes to hold those gatherings at a time when students from other classes and their families can attend, increasing the potential for students' work (and her own, perhaps) to be experienced by members of the community. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, Melora's efforts to do so (as of late May 2011) were thwarted by the high school administration, who would not allow her the space to hold such a gathering. For the last several years, Meg and the elementary school teachers have worked to host a gallery-type event for students' work at either a school or Central Office (depending on the year). Meg and teachers all enjoyed these events, though they were a lot of work. These events also took place during the day, and were therefore scantly attended by parents and other community members, many of whom were working. These gallery moments surrounding students' work are ways that students' teachers recognize the importance of displaying students' work and *opening students' private work* to the experience of others. This exposure and interrelationship between students *as creators* and others as people experiencing students' artistic creations help to frame students *as artists*.

In the beginning of Chapter Three, I noted that one of my initial experiences at the Penland gallery helped to establish my assumption that Meg's work as a teaching artist stood in some kind of tension with the broader work of the Penland School of Crafts. Across the street from the Ridgeway building, Meg's teaching studio, stands a stately white stucco building. The upper floors are dormitories – the lower floor, the gallery. While there is gallery space and space at the annual fundraising auction for the kinds of

work that Meg produces as a professional artist, there is not gallery space for the kinds of work that she creates as a teaching artist. I wonder the ways in which teachers', Meg's, and students' work *as artists* and people who also happen to work in the organization of education would gain significance if, similar to the galleries for its adult students, Penland were willing to make gallery space for their work in its galleries up on Conley Ridge. With Penland's symbolic status, association with worlds perhaps inaccessible to many in Mitchell County, and cultural cache, its *naming* of teachers' work and students' work as artists through *gallery space* (and not a poster board in Penland's dining hall) could bear real significance on the power of articulating artistic work to the organization of schooling.

The Power of Articulation

Teachers are *not* simply maternal beings, professional aspirants, agents of laudable care, or heroic public servants saving the nation; teachers are aesthetic workers whose beautiful and negotiated pedagogical work is continually undercut by the discourse of the professional that pervades the audit culture characteristic of the organization of schooling. Articulating the work of artists to the organization of schooling reveals ways in which processes of working artistically exist in significant tension with the assumptions, language, and practice that organize our experiences and expectations of schooling. The tensions that emerge as an artist's work is articulated – bringing voice and practice to – the organization of schooling reveal the significant ways in which the artistic is *already* moving in the work of teaching. Simultaneously, these tensions draw attention to important symbolic and aesthetic needs currently unmet in schooling's current arrangement.

Throughout, this study has also proved to be a study of the tensions that emerge when an artistic practice of research and representation is articulated to the typical organization of scholarly research in organizational communication. Responding to the last decade's calls for close-up views of particular organizational contexts, I have worked carefully to craft a close-up view of one woman's work in Mitchell County, North Carolina, while simultaneously extrapolating her work to conversations and practices beyond those 222 square miles. Though I anticipated that this study would detail one woman's work as she negotiated her artistic work between two very different organizations, I was surprised to learn that the organizational logics of professionalism and aesthetics were present in various ways at both the Penland School of Crafts and in the Mitchell County Schools.

I began this project hoping to contribute to conversations around the organization of schooling and the use and development of work in critical organizational studies, performance studies, and pedagogy. This study raises questions that need to be addressed further: the role of aesthetics in *enacting* workplace identity and experiences of self in organizations; the possibilities of *building* community across disparate organizations; the role of aesthetics in the mistake-making, surprises and improvisation that inevitably occur in such community work; and teachers' improvisational innovation and resistance in classrooms as a potential source for organizational scholarship, with its general preoccupation with "real work," which doesn't include teachers'. I conclude this study, too, wondering *why*, in a nation of more than 3 *million* teachers (who, I imagine, share some of the same aesthetic modes of working as some of the teachers whose voices shaped this study), there is not more *movement* to organize their collective power to break

what is supposedly fixed in the organization of education. What kinds of aesthetic, communicative, and organizational work need to happen to begin making cracks in the *supposedly fixed* perception of schools' organization at a more political level?

This case provides evidence that the tensions imagined among artistic work and the work of organizing do not get into the folds of the aesthetic nature of organizational work, or the organizational nature of aesthetic work. The pervasiveness of professionalism throughout the aesthetic and organizational processes in Mitchell County indicates that, perhaps, our imaginations for potential resources for mobility, status, and capital may need to expand if we, as practitioners and researchers of organizational communication, are to make meaningful contributions to the myriad meaningful ways of working and organizing in our world. This case also provides a significant portrait of the intersections of the abstract images of societal roles we have – organizational member, professional, artist, teacher, student – and the political efficacy with which we imbue those roles. That teachers and artists have been largely ignored by critical organizational studies indicates a (likely unwitting) bias of our own toward subjects (persons and content) deemed to carry more political weight in our own scholarship.

Though I have written throughout this research about my own experiences in and beyond Mitchell County, there are unwritten elements to this work that cannot translate into language on the page. Earlier in this study, I noted the irony of producing a written study on the merits (perhaps) of craft – and embodied – work in classrooms. Performance studies literature sometimes provides the language and reflexivity necessary to address these issues of researcher-as-self in the research context, yet still struggles with the tension between inclusion of a researcher-self in the text and the vociferous insights and

practices of those whom a researcher might encounter in the process of doing the work. This project's methodology has provided me a way of learning Meg's work intensively while still acknowledging my own experiences in the various studios and media with which I have experience: those specks of book jacket dust, remnants of choreography, and embodied memories of classrooms that have worked their way into this study.

This study's tensions are the tensions that emerge as the performance of artistic work is articulated to the organization of schooling – schooling in Mitchell County, schooling writ large, and the schooling of the university. Academics are, after all, teachers too.

When the articulation of artistic work to the organization of schooling means that we must name teachers as *artists*, we are forced to think of ways to organize the work of navigating the space between students, curricula, and teachers' own relationships with the world differently than we do when teachers are arbiters of the test. The blanket of audit culture that exists nationally is, perhaps, what makes the loss of this opportunity in Mitchell County so poignant, for *there* exist the possibilities for stronger relationships and intentional partnerships between the work of artists, the Penland School of Crafts, and the Mitchell County Schools. Naming teachers as *artists* certainly will not undo the current logics that organize schooling for our students and teachers; it is a web tightly woven. Within that web, the aesthetic offers a provocative location from which teachers can give voice and practice to their interesting and innovative – and necessary – deviations from the demobilizing standardized scripts of standardized teaching as *artistic*, rather than wrong.

References

Adamson, G. (2010). Perpetual motion. In V.C. Oliver (Curator). *Hand + Made* (pp. 21-26). Houston, TX: Contemporary Art Museum Houston.

Albers, A. (1944). One aspect of art work. *Design, 4*, 21-22.

Alvesson, M., & Deetz, S. (Eds.). (2000). *Doing critical management research*. London: Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications.

Alvic, P. (2003). *Weavers of the southern highlands*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.

American Community Survey (2009). Mitchell County, North Carolina. Selected Economic Characteristics 2005-2009, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Retrieved from: http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=05000US37121&-qr_name=ACS_2009_5YR_G00_DP5YR3&-ds_name=ACS_2009_5YR_G00_&-_lang=en&-_sse=on). Accessed 25 April 2011.

American Community Survey (2009). Mitchell County, North Carolina. Selected Social Characteristics 2005-2009, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Retrieved from: http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=05000US37121&-qr_name=ACS_2009_5YR_G00_DP5YR2&-ds_name=ACS_2009_5YR_G00_&-_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-_sse=on. Accessed 25 April 2011.

American Community Survey (2009). Mitchell County, North Carolina. 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Data Profile Highlights. Retrieved from: http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFFacts?_event=ChangeGeoContext&geo_id=05000US37121&_geoContext=&_street=&_county=Mitchell+County&_cityTown=&_state=&_zip=&_lang=en&_sse=on&ActiveGeoDiv=&_useEV=&pctxt=fph&pgsl=010&_submenuId=factsheet_1&ds_name=ACS_2009_5YR_SAFF&_ci_nbr=null&qr_name=null&reg=null%3Anull&_keyword=&_industry. Accessed 25 April 2011.

American Community Survey (2009). Mitchell County, North Carolina. 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Population and Housing Narrative Profile 2005-2009. Retrieved from: http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/NPTable?_bm=y&-qr_name=ACS_2009_5YR_G00_NP01&-geo_id=05000US37121&-gc_url=&-ds_name=&-_lang=en. Accessed 25 April 2011.

Aprill, A. (2004). *Rules for arts education radicals*. (Available from Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education, 203 N. Wabash, Suite 1720, Chicago, IL 60601, http://www.capeweb.org/tprules.html)

Aprill, A. (2010). Direct instruction vs. arts integration: A false dichotomy. *Teaching Artist Journal, 8*(1), 6-15.

Arendt, H. (1998). *The human condition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1958).

Ashcraft, K.L. & Mumby, D.K. (2004). *Reworking gender: A feminist communicology of organization*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ashcraft, K.L. (2005). Resistance through consent?: Occupational identity, organizational form, and the maintenance of masculinity among commercial airline pilots. *Management Communication Quarterly, 19*(1), 67-90.

Ashcraft, K.L. (2006). Back to work: Sights/sites of difference in gender and organizational communication studies. In B.J. Dow & J.T. Wood (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of gender and communication* (pp. 97-122). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ashcraft, K.L. (2007). Appreciating the "work" of discourse: Occupational identity and difference as organizing mechanisms in the case of commercial airline pilots. *Discourse & Communication*, 1, 9-36.

Barba, E. (1995). *The paper canoe: A guide to theatre anthropology*. (R. Fowler, Trans.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Becker, J.S. (1998). *Selling tradition: Appalachia and the construction of an American folk, 1930-1940*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Berensohn, P. (1972). *Finding one's way with clay: Pinched pottery and the color of clay*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Bogart, A. & Landau, T. (2005). *The Viewpoints book: A practical guide to Viewpoints and composition.* New York, NY: Theatre Communications Group.

Booth, E. (2001). *The everyday work of art*. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.com, Inc.

Bovée, A. & Waller, A. (12/06/2011). The Mitchell County Gay Straight Alliance is about community, not conversion. *Mountain Xpress,* Asheveille, NC. Retrieved from:.http://www.mountainx.com/article/38135/The-Mitchell-County-Gay-Straight-Alliance-is-about-community-not-conversion

Bowman, M.S. & Bowman, R.L. (2010). Telling Katrina stories: Problems and opportunities in engaging disaster. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 96*(4), 455-461.

Bratich, J.Z. & Bush, H.M. (2011). Fabricating activism: Craft-work, popular culture, gender. *Utopian Studies, 22*(2), 233-260.

Braverman, H. (1998). Labor and monopoly: The degradation of work in the twentieth century. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press. 25th Anniversary Edition. (Original work published 1974).

Britzman, D.P. (2009). *The very thought of education: Psychoanalysis and the impossible professions.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Burnaford, G. (2003). Language matters: Clarifying partnerships between teachers and artists. *Teaching Artist Journal, 1*(3), 168-171.

Carey, J. (1989). *Communication as culture: Essays on media and society*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Charmaz, K. (2005). Grounded theory in the 21st century: Applications for advancing social justice studies. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). (pp. 507-536). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cheney, G. & Ashcraft, K.L. (2007). Considering "the professional" in communication studies: Implications for theory and research within and beyond the boundaries of organizational communication. *Communication Theory, 17,* 146-175.

Cheney, G., Ritz, D. Lair, D.J., & Kendall, B. (2010). *Just a job? Communication, ethics, and professional life.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Cheney, G., Wilhelmsson, M., & Zorn, T.E. (2002). 10 Strategies for engaged scholarship. *Management Communication Quarterly, 16*(1), 92-100.

Cheney, G. (2007). Organizational communication comes out. *Management Communication Quarterly, 21*(1), 80-91.

Chouinard, Y. (2005). *Let my people go surfing: The education of a reluctant businessman.* New York, NY: Penguin Press.

Clair, R. P., McConnell, M., Bell, S., Hackbarth, K., & Mathes, S. (2008). Why work?: The perceptions of a "real job" and the rhetoric of work through the ages. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.

Conquergood, D. (1985). Performing as a moral act: Ethical dimensions of the ethnography of performance. *Text and Performance Quarterly, 5*(2), 1-13.

Conquergood, D. (1991). Rethinking ethnography: Towards a critical cultural politics. *Communication Monographs, 58*(2), 179-194.

Council on Foreign Relations. (2012). *Independent task force report no. 68: U.S. education reform and national security.* New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations Press.

Crawford, M. (2009). *Shop class as soulcraft: An inquiry into the values of work.* New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). Education, equity, and the right to learn. In J.I. Goodlad & T.J. McMannon (Eds.), *The public purpose of education and schooling* (pp. 41-54). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Deetz, S.A. (1992). *Democracy in an age of corporate colonization*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Deetz, S.A. (2005). Critical theory. In S.K. May & D.K. Mumby, (Eds.). *Engaging organizational communication theory and research* (pp. 85-112). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Dempsey, S. (2010). Critiquing communication engagement. *Management Communication Quarterly, 24*(3), 359-390.

Dempsey, S., Dutta, M., Frey, L.R., Goodall, H.L., Madison, D.S., Mercieca, J., Nakayama, T., & Miller, K. (2010). What is the role of the communication discipline in social justice, community engagement, and public scholarship? A visit to the *CM Café*. *Communication Monographs, 78*(2), 256-271.

Dewey, J. (1997). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education.* New York, NY: Free Press. (Original work published 1916).

Dewey, J. (2005). *Art as experience.* New York, NY: The Berkley Publishing Group. (Original work published 1934).

Dolan, J. (2005). *Utopia in performance.* Ann Arbor: U of Mich. P.

Dreyer, R. (2004). The joy of hands at work: Penland school and the evolution of craft education. In J.W. McLaughlin (Ed.), *The nature of craft and the Penland experience* (pp.). New York, NY: Lark Books.

Duberman, M. (1972). *Black Mountain: An exploration in community.* New York, NY: E.P. Dutton & Co.

Duma, A.L. & Silverstein, L.B.(2008). Achieving a greater impact: Developing the skills of teaching artists to lead professional development for teachers. *Teaching Artist Journal, 6*(2), 118-125.

Durkheim, E. (1974). *Sociology and philosophy*. (T. Parsons, Trans.). New York, NY: The Free Press.

Eisenberg, E.M. & Riley, P. (2001). Organizational culture. In F.M. Jablin & L.L. Putnam (Eds.). *The new handbook of organizational communication* (pp. 291-322). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Eisenberg, E.M. (2007). A communication perspective on interorganizational cooperation and inner-city education. (1995). In E.M. Eisenberg (Ed.). *Strategic ambiguities: Essays on communication, organization, and identity* (pp. 129-143). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Eisenberg, E.M. (2007). Conclusion. In E.M. Eisenberg (Ed.). *Strategic ambiguities: Essays on communication, organization, and identity* (pp. 289-298). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Eisenberg, E.M. (2007). Jamming, transcendence through organizing. (1990). In E.M. Eisenberg (Ed.). *Strategic ambiguities: Essays on communication, organization, and identity* (pp. 75-99). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Eisenberg, E.M. (2007). Karl Weick and the aesthetics of contingency. (2006). In E.M. Eisenberg (Ed.). *Strategic ambiguities: Essays on communication, organization, and identity* (pp. 270-288). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ellsworth, E. (2005). *Places of learning: Media, architecture, pedagogy*. New York, NY: Routeledge.

Ennis, Lynn Jones. (1995). *Penland and the 'revival' of craft 'traditions': A study of the making of American identities.* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). School of the Union Institute, Raleigh, NC.

Estrin, J. (2009). *Closing the innovation gap: Reigniting the spark of creativity in a global economy*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Florida, R. (2002). *The rise of the creative class: And how it's transforming work, leisure, community, and everyday life*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Florida, R. (2010). *The great reset: How new ways of living and working drive post-crash prosperity.* New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Forbes, J. (11/15/2011). Mitchell County Gay Straight Alliance encounters protestors at its first meeting. *Mountain Xpress*, Asheville, NC. Retrieved from: http://www.mountainx.com/article/37478/Mitchell-County-Gay-Straight-Alliance-encounters-protestors-at-its-first-meeting-UPDATED

Foucault, M. (1984). *The Foucault reader*. In P. Rabinow (Ed.), New York: Pantheon Books.

Fournier, V. (1999). The appeal to "professionalism" as a disciplinary mechanism. *Sociological Review.* 281-307.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* (Trans. M.B. Ramos). New York: Continuum. (Original work published 1970).

Geertz, C. (2000). *The interpretation of cultures.* New York, NY: Basic Books. (Original work published 1973).

Giebelhaus, C.R. & Bowman, C.L. (2002). Teaching mentors: Is it worth the effort? *The Journal of Educational Research, 95*(4), 246-254.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The Constitution of society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Gini, A. (2000). *My job my self: Work and the creation of the modern individual*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Giroux, H.A. (1997). *Pedagogy and the politics of hope: Theory, culture, and schooling: A critical reader*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Grumet, M. R. (1988). *Bitter milk*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.

Grumet, M., Anderson, A., & Osmond, C. (2008). Finding form for curriculum research. In K. Gallagher (Ed.). *The methodological dilemma: Creative, critical, and collaborative approaches to qualitative research* (pp. 136-156). New York, NY: Routledge.

Gunn, J. & Lucaites, J.L. (2010). The contest of faculties: On discerning the politics of social engagement in the academy. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 96*(4), 404-412.

Hall, C., Thomson, P., & Russell, L. (2007). Teaching like an artist: The pedagogic identities and practices of artists in schools. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 28*(5), 605-619.

HandMade in America. (2010). *Crafting large successes in small towns: HandMade in America, small town program: The first fifteen years 1996-2010*. Asheville, NC.

Hardy, M.C. (2008). Toe River History. "Prison work camps." http://toeriver.blogspot.com/. Accessed 17 May 2011.

Hardy, M.C. (2009). *Mitchell County*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing.

Hartelius E.J. & Cherwitz, R.A. (2010). The Dorothy doctrine of engaged scholarship: The rhetorical discipline 'Had it All Along'. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 9*6(4), 436-442.

Harter, L.M., Leeman, M., Norander, S., Young, S.L. & Rawlins, W.K. (2008). The intermingling of aesthetic sensibilities and instrumental rationalities in a collaborative arts studio. *Management Communication Quarterly, 21*(4), 423-453.

Hawkin, P., Lovins, A., & Lovins, L.H. (1999). *Natural capitalism: Creating the next industrial revolution.* New York, NY: Hachette Book Group.

Higgins, C. (2005). Dewey's conception of vocation: Existential, aesthetic, and educational implications for teachers. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 37*(4), 441-464.

Houchard, M.A. (2005). *Principal leadership, teacher morale, and student achievement in seven schools in Mitchell County, North Carolina*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.

Hyde, L. (1983). *The gift*. Edinburgh: Canongate.

Hyde, L. (1998). *Trickster makes the world*. New York, NY: North Point Press.

Ivey, B. (2008). *Arts, inc.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Jaspin, E. (2007). *Buried in the bitter waters: The hidden history of racial cleansing in America.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Jurgens, E.H. (1996). *Southern Appalachian settlement schools as early initiators of integrated services.* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.

Kincheloe, J.L. & McLaren, P. (2005). Participatory action research: Communicative action in the public sphere. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd Ed.) (pp. 303-342). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kincheloe, J.L.. (1999). *How do we tell the workers?: The socioeconomic foundations of work and vocational education.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Kristofferson, R.B. (2007). *Craft capitalism: Craftworkers and early industrialization in Hamilton, Ontario 1840-1872.* Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Lacan, J. (1998). *Encore. On feminine sexuality: The limits of love and knowledge*. 1972-1972. Book 20. Trans. B. Fink. In J. Miller (Ed.), New York, NY: Norton.

Langer, S. (1957). *Problems of art*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Levine, F. (2009). What's the role of skill in the DIY community? Blog entry, 14 Dec 2009. Journalofmoderncraft.com. Accessed 23 Aug. 2011.

Lindlof, T.R. (1995). *Qualitative communication research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Little, J.W. (1990). The mentor phenomenon and the social organization of teaching. *Review of Research in Education, 16*, 297-351.

Madison, D.S. (2005). *Critical ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

May, S. & Mumby, D.K. (2005). Conclusion: Engaging the future of organizational communication theory and research. In S. May & D.K. Mumby (Eds.), *Engaging organizational communication theory and research* (pp. 263-282). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

McFadden, A.H. & Smith, P. (2004). *The social construction of educational leadership: Southern Appalachian ceilings*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

McLaughlin, J.W. (2004). (Ed.). *The nature of craft and the Penland experience*. New York, NY: Lark Books.

Meisenbach, R.J. (2008). Working with tensions: Materiality, discourse, and (dis)empowerment in occupational identity negotiation among higher education fund-raisers. *Management Communication Quarterly, 22*(2), 258-287.

Mielke, D.N. (Ed.) (1978). *Teaching mountain children: Toward a foundation of understanding.* Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press.

Mitchell County North Carolina School Board Meeting Minutes. (October 2010).

Mitchell County Schools. (2011). Mitchell County Schools. Retrieved from: http://www.mcsnc.org/home/

Mitchell County Schools. (n.d.). *School information*. Retrieved from http://www.mcsnc.org.

Morgan, L. & Blythe, L. (1971). *Gift from the hills*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press. Orig. pub. 1958.

Mumby D.K. & Stohl, C. (1996). Disciplining organizational communication studies. *Management Communication Quarterly, 10*(1), 50-72.

Mumby, D.K. (2004). Discourse, power, and ideology: Unpacking the critical approach. In D. Grant, C. Hardy, C. Oswick, N. Phillips, and L. Putnam (Eds.), *The handbook of organizational discourse* (pp. 237-258). London: Sage.

Mumby, D.K. (2005). Theorizing resistance in organizational studies: A dialectical approach. *Management Communication Quarterly, 19,* 1-26.

North Carolina History Project (2011). John Locke Foundation. Raleigh, NC. "Cameron Morrison (1869-1953)." http://www.northcarolinahistory.org/commentary/131/entry. Accessed 17 May 2011.

North Carolina State Board of Elections. (2012). Amendment One Results for Mitchell County http://results.enr.clarityelections.com/NC/36596/80787/en/md_data.html?cid=425000010&a=Mitchell. Accessed 12 May 2012.

North Carolina State Board of Elections. (2012). Statewide Election Results http://results.enr.clarityelections.com/NC/36596/80787/en/summary.html. Accessed 12 May 2012.

North Carolina State Parks. Mount Mitchell State Park. http://www.ncparks.gov/Visit/parks/momi/main.php. Accessed 30 April 2011.

Notowny, S. (2011). Immanent effects: Notes on cre-activity. (A. Derieg, Trans.). In G. Raunig, G. Ray, & U. Wuggenig (Eds.). *Critique of creativity: Precarity, subjectivity, and resistance in the 'creative industries'* (pp. 9-22). London, U.K.: Mayfly Books.

Penland School of Crafts. (2011). Mission. Retrieved from: http://penland.org/about/mission.html

Penland School of Crafts. (2011). Penland school of crafts. Retrieved from: http://penland.org/about/description.html

Penland School of Crafts. (2011). Teaching artist initiative. Retrieved from: http://penland.org/programs/tai_mission.html

Penland School of Crafts. (2011). Teaching at Penland. Retrieved from: http://penland.org/classes/teaching/teaching.html

Penland School of Crafts. (n.d.) *Penland school of crafts*. http://www.penland.org.

Pezullo, P. (2010). Tripping over boundary-stones: Reflections on engaged scholarship. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 96*(4), 450-454.

Phelan, P. (1993). *Unmarked: The politics of performance*. London, U.K.: Routledge.

Pirsig, R.M. (2005). *Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance: An inquiry into values.* New York, NY: Harper Perennial. (Original work published 1974).

Rabkin, N. & Redmond, R. (Eds.). (2004). *Putting the arts in the picture*. Chicago, IL: Columbia College Chicago.

Raunig, G., Ray, G., & Wuggenig, U. (2011). Introduction: On the strange case of 'creativity' and its troubled resurrection. In G. Raunig, G. Ray, & U. Wuggenig (Eds.). *Critique of creativity: Precarity, subjectivity, and resistance in the 'creative industries'* (pp. 1-6). London, U.K.: Mayfly Books.

Ravitch, D. (2000). *Left back: A century of failed school reforms*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Ravitch, D. (2010). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Risatti, H. (2007). *A theory of craft: Function and aesthetic expression*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.

Ritzer, G. (2011). *The McDonaldization of society* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Rolnik, S. (2011). The geopolitics of pimping. (B. Holmes, Trans.). In G. Raunig, G. Ray, & U. Wuggenig (Eds.). *Critique of creativity: Precarity, subjectivity, and resistance in the 'creative industries'* (pp. 23-40). London, U.K.: Mayfly Books.

Saukko, P. (2005). Methodologies for cultural studies: An integrative approach. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.) (pp. 343-356). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sennett, R. (2008). *The craftsman.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Sheppard, M. (1935). *Cabins in the laurels.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Swift, C. (2010). Academic engagement. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 96*(4), 443-449.

Taubman, P. (2011). Making nothing happen: Affective life under audit. In L. Yates & M. Grumet (Eds.), *Curriculum in today's world: Configuring knowledge, identities, work, and politics* (pp. 155-174). New York, NY: Routledge.

Taubman, P. M. (2009). *Teaching by numbers: Deconstructing the discourse of standards and accountability in education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Taylor, B.C. (2005). Postmodern theory. In S. May & D.K. Mumby (Eds.), *Engaging organizational communication theory and research* (pp. 113-140). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

These houses of God. (10/11/1934). *Spruce Pine News*, *7*(37).

Trethewey, A., Scott, C., & LeGreco, M. (2006). Constructing embodied organizational identities. In. B.J. Dow & J.T. Wood (Eds.). *The Sage handbook of gender and communication* (pp. 123-141). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tyack, D. (1974). *The one best system: A history of American urban education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

Urban Institute. (2003). *Investing in creativity: A study of the support structure for U.S. artists.* Washington, D.C.: Jackson, M.R; Kabwasa-Green, F.; Swenson, D.; Herranz, J.; Ferryman, K.; Atlas, C.; Wallner, E.; & Rosenstein, C.E.

US Census Bureau (2009). Mitchell County, North Carolina Quick Facts. http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37121.html. Accessed 30 April 2011.

US Department of Agriculture Forest Service (2011). National Forests in NC Fact Sheet FY 2010. http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5283724.pdf . Updated Feb. 2011. Accessed 30 April 2011. Updated 5 March 2009.

US Department of Education (2012). *Arts education in public elementary and secondary schools 1999-2000 and 2009-10.* (National Center for Education Statistics Publication No. 2012014). Washington, D.C.

US Forest Service (2011). Secure Rural Schools Program, 2008-2011. http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5102926.pdf. Accessed 1 May 2011.

Vanderstraeten, R. (2007). Professions in organizations, professional work in education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 28*(5), 621-635.

Waller, E.C. (1931). *A survey of the church, independent schools and colleges of the Southern Appalachians.* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC.

Warhurst, C., Witz, A., & Nickson, D. (2003). The labour of aesthetics and the aesthetics of organization. *Organization, 38*(7), 25-35.

Weber, M. (2003). *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. (T. Parsons, Trans.). Mineola, NY: Dover Publications. (Original work published 1958).

Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to labor: How working class kids get working class jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Yates, L. & Grumet, M. (2011). (Eds.). *Curriculum in today's world: Configuring knowledge, identities, work, and politics*. New York, NY: Routledge.